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The academic middle manager in Higher Education: perceptions and aspirations

**Crystal Oldman
MSc, MA**

Doctorate in Education

The Open University

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Abstract

This thesis examines the knowledge, skills and attributes required by middle managers in higher education institutions and the aspirations of academics to move to a management position. Taking a grounded theory approach to the design of the study and the analysis of the findings, 26 middle managers from three 'post 1992' universities in England were interviewed in depth about their positions and their views on the knowledge, skills and attributes required in delivering their roles.

An illustrative model was developed from the analysis of the interview data to demonstrate the relationship between the elements identified in the study as essential in the delivery of the middle manager's role.

The support and development needs of managers were identified along with the unexpected finding that managers from industry could enter higher education successfully with no prior experience of employment in the sector.

In parallel with the interviews, the academic communities of the three universities were offered the opportunity to complete a survey to provide some contextual material on their perceptions of management in higher education and their aspirations to become managers in their future careers.

The findings of the study are relevant to human resource departments and senior teams supporting recruitment to academic middle management posts and meeting the development needs of current middle managers.

Glossary

DBIS Department of Business, Innovation and Skills: the current (2013) government department which is focussed on economic growth. The department invests in the development of skills and education in the population to supports the promotion of trade and innovation and the growth of business.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-innovation-skills

DfES Department for Education and Skills: a previous government department responsible until 2010 for Education and Skills development in the schools, Further and Higher Education Institutions. It has been replaced by the Department for Education with a responsibility for Education and Children.

DIUS Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills: a previous government department created in 2007 to take over some of the functions of the Department of Education and Skills and of the Department of Trade and Industry. In 2009 it was merged into the newly formed Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (see below). It was responsible for adult learning, including Higher Education, some parts of further education, higher education, skills, science and innovation.

Guild HE Guild Higher Education: A membership organisation of 27 UK post 1992 Higher Education institutions, many of which are small and specialist.

www.guildhe.ac.uk

HE Higher Education: University level education provided in universities and colleges which have been formally approved by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) as meeting the required standards.

HEFCE Higher Education Funding Council: An organisation which distributes public money for higher education provision to universities and colleges in England. It also monitors the providers of higher education to ensure that the funding is used appropriately. The equivalent organisations in the other countries are the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL).

www.hefce.ac.uk

HEI Higher Education Institutions: organisations designated as offering university level education as the main core of their provision.

LFHE Leadership Foundation for Higher Education: A membership organisation which provides a support and advice on leadership, governance and management for all the UK's universities and higher education colleges.

www.lfhe.ac.uk

QAA Quality Assurance Agency: A statutory organisation with 195 subscribing organisations, contracted to establish standards for the quality of provision within higher education institutions and quality assurance reports to various HE funding councils and government bodies.

www.qaa.ac.uk

RAE Research Assessment Exercise: The Research Assessment Exercise was conducted in 2008 jointly by the four HE funding bodies of the four countries of the UK to produce quality profiles for each submission of research activity made by universities and colleges.

The quality profiles have been used to determine the level of grant for research to be awarded for each university in the years that followed (2009/10-2014/15).

www.rae.ac.uk

REF Research Excellence Framework: The Research Excellence Framework will replace the RAE in 2014. It is a new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions which will then be used to determine future research funding allocations from 2015/16.

www.ref.ac.uk

TRAC Transparent Approach to Costing: This is a national framework provided by HEFCE for costing teaching in English higher education institutions based on established Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) principles. The information assists HEIs in utilising robust cost information when pricing their provision and planning for a sustainable future.

www.hefce.ac.uk

UUK Universities United Kingdom: a membership organisation of 134 universities in the UK which aims to provide the voice of Higher Education and to promote excellence in the sector.

www.universitiesuk.ac.uk

1. Introduction

This study was prompted by two factors: my own experiences of management in Higher Education (HE), as an academic and later as a middle manager, and the rapidly changing economic context of higher education in the first decade of the 21st century.

I have experienced poor management in HE. I have witnessed managers being appointed where they did not enjoy managing people and were motivated primarily by status and salary. There was negligible assessment of their management skills prior to appointment and little support provided later for the development and maintenance of good management skills and addressing poor performance.

As an academic I observed many managers who also appeared unprepared for their roles but also resistant to any training or education to support their development. I therefore wanted to explore and understand more about the skills, knowledge and attributes required for the role and how these were developed.

As an academic manager, I had also experienced management operation and behaviour which appeared to be significantly challenged by the new economic pressures within the higher education sector brought about by the recession.

Both aspects led me to focus this study on the role of the academic middle manager and specifically the skills, knowledge and attributes required for the role. I reasoned that if these aspects could be understood, there was an opportunity to inform the selection processes in universities so that the managers most likely to succeed would be appointed to the roles and those in the middle management roles could be supported to develop further to maximise their effectiveness.

Professional background

At the time of commencing the doctorate in 2009 I had worked in HE for 15 years. I started my employment in HE after an 18 year clinical nursing career in the NHS. I commenced in HE as a senior lecturer, was appointed to a position of Principal Lecturer, then Head of Department, Head of School and lastly Dean - all posts which I held in the same post-1992 university.

In 2012 I moved from HE to a chief executive position in a national community nursing charity, 4 years after appointment to the Dean post and after 18 years exactly in HE. The decision to seek employment outside of Higher Education was first considered when reflecting on the research undertaken during my doctorate and is an indication of the impact this research has had on me as the researcher.

During my career in HE I observed a variety of management and leadership styles, many of them counter-productive to achieving the aims of the organisation. I was also aware that the changing nature of HE potentially requires a different set of knowledge, skills and attributes which may not have applied under previous economic and political conditions.

When I became a manager in 2004, I was determined not to follow the style of leadership and management I had observed in my managers and to explore alternative approaches. To support my leadership and management development, I completed an MA in Leadership and Management in HE at the Missenden Abbey Management Centre and was inspired to examine further the critical role of the middle manager in HE through the professional doctorate programme.

The context of Higher Education

This study took place at a time of considerable change in HE: the economic recession had just commenced, a new coalition government came into power in 2010 and the previous

Labour government's target of 50% of the population holding a first degree was retracted. Variable tuition fees were introduced and universities were compelled to find alternative sources of income in order to maintain their business (Broadbent and Middlehurst 2013).

The landscape of many universities in the UK has changed considerably over the last decade as they have adapted to the consequences of widening participation under the previous Labour government's commitment to increasing participation in Higher Education (Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2003). The notion of the 'business facing' university and the search for 'third stream' funding were responses to the Leitch review of 2007 (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) 2007) but it was not until the economic recession that this became a strategy for survival for many universities.

In June 2009 the Labour government merged the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform into one Department – of Business, Innovation and Skills, which delivered a message about the direction of the current administration in relation to the purpose of Higher Education.

In May 2010, in the midst of an economic recession, a coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties was formed. Soon after, an independent review chaired by Lord Browne of Madingley was commissioned, concerning the funding of Higher Education (Department of Business Innovation and Skills, 2010). This brought into sharp relief the management of HE organisations and the challenges faced in responding to major changes to the funding of Higher Education in the UK.

Widening participation and the development of skills for the workforce have remained high on the agenda even in the light of the Browne Review and perhaps are even more significant with the introduction of variable annual tuition fees to a maximum of £9000 per year (2012/13 entry). The need to diversify the income streams in HE and to work with

industry to develop work based programmes for students has become more critical as anxieties about the reduction in student numbers have heightened.

This position is supported by Middlehurst (2010) in her paper examining leadership in HE in a time of economic turbulence and financial challenge, where she describes universities' responses to the changed situation as tactical, adaptive or generative, with the latter considered to be the most productive.

Tactical approaches to managing the fall in the economy within universities involve cuts to bonuses and a pay freeze for the senior management team, a deliberately slow recruitment to vacancies and targeted savings to all departments. Adaptive approaches include voluntary severance schemes, restructuring departments to form larger subject groupings and outsourcing of services such as catering.

After the start of the economic recession in 2008, I was aware of both tactical and adaptive approaches to savings being made. The third approach described by Middlehurst (2010) is generative which she found was a less prevalent response. The activities include positioning the university to deliver regional priorities, investment in overseas opportunities and sharing services with other businesses. Again, many of the activities described I witnessed, with varying degrees of success, in my employing university and the conclusion of the paper resonated with my experience.

..a capacity building agenda is needed at both the institutional and individual levels. (Middlehurst, 2010:89)

Middlehurst compares the HE sector's response with that of other sectors and calls for leaders and managers in HE to be provided with opportunities to develop their leadership capacity, to develop networks and skills in generative activities. The lessons learned

about leadership in difficult times from outside HE are presented as the key to successful “regenerative leadership” (p89) in HE.

The economic challenges faced by the HE sector and its potential responses were clearly outlined by PA Consulting in 2009 when they published a document as part of their ‘Thought Leadership’ series entitled ‘Escaping the Red Queen Effect: succeeding in the new economics of higher education’. They described the fundamental changes required to transform what is described as “an outmoded university business model” (PA Consulting 2009:5). Educational programmes are described in the language of business – as products - and four potential alternative university models of provision are described. These are the Amazon University (after the on-line retailer of the same name), the On-Demand University, the Learning Hotel and the Umbrella University.

The five essential attributes which will determine success in the new economy were also outlined in the paper. These are ‘focus on the market’, ‘excellence in critical capabilities’, ‘agility in responding to customers’, ‘impact on valued outcomes’ and ‘sustained margins for investment’. The business language is clear and the need for the leaders and managers to respond accord with Middlehurst’s (2010) view of the need for regenerative capabilities in the leaders and managers of HE.

The critical role of academic managers in navigating through this new landscape may arguably need new approaches in order to manage the uncertainty within their staff and to manage the development of new income streams, identifying and engaging with relevant employers and leading the way to becoming business facing enterprises. In considering this, I believe that such changes will require the development of new and existing skills, knowledge and attributes, which is an area yet to be addressed in the literature.

The purpose of the research

The focus of the doctoral research was primarily an in-depth examination of the role of a middle manager in HE within the current context of 'post-1992' HE. A middle manager, for the purposes of this research was defined as a head of school (or an equivalent title, such as head of department), with responsibility for managing people, normally academic staff, and academic subject leaders within their school or department. However, they will have commenced their careers in HE as teachers and researchers and may have had little or no aspiration to become a manager of people or departments at the outset of their academic career.

The purpose of the research was to gain a greater understanding of the role of the middle manager in HE, including what their day-to day work comprises, from the perspective of current heads of school within three 'post-1992' universities in the UK and to determine how they perceived the essential leadership and management skills that enable a head of school to undertake the role effectively in the rapidly changing environment of higher education.

The research study was further extended to include the perspective of the wider community of academics, to understand how they perceive management in HE and what aspirations they may have to become managers in the future.

It is anticipated that the findings of the research will inform the way in which the role of the head of school is conceived, constructed, supported and understood within HE. In addition, it is anticipated that this research will help in the identification, preparation and support of future leaders and managers from within academic staff communities.

If it is indeed true that the academic leader requires in-depth knowledge and understanding of the culture of the university in which they work (Birnbaum, 2001;

McCaffery, 2005), then the future managers and leaders of the next decade are already working within our universities.

Research Questions

The specific research questions are:

1. How do academic middle managers perceive their role?
2. What are the requisite knowledge, skills and attributes of the academic middle manager and how and when are these acquired?
3. What are the consequences of being an academic middle manager in relation to participation in teaching and research?

In an attempt to provide some additional context for the study, the following subsidiary questions were also proposed:

- i) What are the perceptions within HE of the academic middle manager's role?
- ii) What are the motivations and aspirations of academics to become managers?

Having determined the research questions, the literature was then explored in relation to these to gain a wider knowledge of the subject area and an in-depth understanding of the previous research that has been undertaken in this area.

The chapters that follow cover the literature search, review and emergent themes, the approach selected to investigate the research questions and the design and conduct of the research. These are followed by an analysis of the findings of the research which then leads to conclusions and implications for professional practice in HE management.

The thesis concludes with a chapter exploring reflections on the professional practice of the researcher and the potential relevance of the research for professional management practice outside of HE.

2. Literature Search

This chapter covers the way in which the literature was searched and suitable material identified for inclusion in the review. The approach used in managing and critiquing the literature is also covered to provide transparency and auditability in the methods used.

The search of the literature and the key words used reflect the focus on middle management in Higher Education and the search was undertaken in a number of ways. Relevant online data bases held in the OU Library were searched on multiple occasions, utilising the key words 'Higher' 'Education', 'Management', 'Leadership', 'Skills', 'Development', 'University', 'Universities' in the title.

Initially the dates set were restricted to include 10 years, from 1999 to 2009. This produced a manageable number of references at 362. The rationale for the date restriction was that many articles found included an historical overview of management structures, roles and functions in higher education and any literature referred to in the articles identified with a date of publication before 1999 could be traced from the reference lists in the publications identified. This reference tracking proved to be a useful indicator of the researchers who were widely published and referenced in this field, such as Rosemary Deem (Deem, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2009; Deem and Brehony, 2005; and Deem et al, 2007).

In addition to the search of the data bases, an email alert utilising 'Zetoc' via the OU library searching facilities was set up. The Zetoc alert system provided an alert to new publications on a daily basis based on the key terms provided for the automated search of new material. Key journals and key words had been identified and the links to newly published articles in the identified journals were emailed at intervals throughout the study.

This led to the inclusion of literature beyond the original publication date limits of 1999 to 2009, as new research with findings relevant to the study were published and where relevant, were included up to the first quarter of 2013. Ensuring a search of the literature throughout the study provided the opportunity to compare the findings to the emerging literature, as it was published.

The search engine 'Google Scholar' was also utilised, and many references have been identified this way. Linking Google Scholar to the Open University website as suggested by the OU library provided an instant link to full text articles and saved a considerable amount of time in identifying and locating the publications.

This method was particularly valuable in identifying relevant sources of 'grey literature', including one MSc dissertation (Amor, 2007) and one doctorate thesis (Inman, 2007).

The dissertation by Amor (2007) led to an exploration of the organisation 'Investors in People' (IIP), which was set up in the recession of the 1990s to assist organisations in focusing on what is argued to be their largest asset – their employees – in order to increase productivity. The IIP standards support the notion that the development of management skills in the workforce will improve the overall performance of the organisation and this was evidenced recently in an empirical study by Bourne and Franco-Santos (2010). It is notable that my own HE organisation at the time had delayed its application for IIP accreditation whilst the management development strategy was developed.

The identification of IPP also demonstrates that the search of the literature was an iterative process in which the original key words provided excellent guidance but were not wholly definitive. As the search evolved and the literature was explored, relevant sources of literature were identified through reference tracking and the cycle of discovery continued.

Searching widely on Google Scholar also led to many lines of inquiry which provided additional rich sources of literature. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) is a government funded organisation whose main purpose is to develop and improve the management and leadership skills of the existing and future leaders of HE. It was established in 2004 by the organisation Universities UK (UUK), a representative body for the executive heads of UK universities, and Guild HE, a representative body for small Higher Education establishments (LFHE, 2004).

The original intention was that it should become a self-funding body through its training and development activities, but 20% of its income is dependent on funding from the four HE funding bodies of the UK. The development activities include programmes for a range of middle and senior managers in HE institutions.

The LFHE currently commissions a number of research projects annually, many of which are relevant to the focus of this research and they provided an excellent foundation in terms of the context setting and rationale for further research. The LFHE website was returned to at intervals throughout the study as it provided a number of additional sources of literature as they were published.

The online publication 'Academic Leadership' was identified through Google Scholar. This publication was established in 2004 and includes peer reviewed international studies in full text with unrestricted access and again proved to be a rich source of literature relevant to the research question. The Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) was located through examination of the literature identified and was also a useful source of research material.

The following criteria were used in making decisions about the relevance of the literature to be included in the review:

- Publication dates 1999-2009 (start of the doctorate) unless a seminal paper
- Peer reviewed publications (books, journals, online publications)
- Empirical research
- Literature reviews
- Policy documents
- Position statements from recognised scholars of leadership and management in HE
- Relevance to the research question through reading the abstract

The creation of the literature review which follows was an iterative process. Additional literature was reviewed throughout the course of the study as themes emerged from the findings. For example, the search was extended during the research process to include a wider view on general middle management research, such as Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) in order to ensure that the management of HE was placed in a broader context.

The inclusion of such literature in the review would not have occurred if the boundaries of the literature search described earlier had been strictly adhered to. The parameters were extended to include seminal texts in leadership and management, including those of Handy (1985), Bennis (1989) and Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) which informed the wider view. These were identified through earlier study of leadership and management when undertaking an MA in Leadership and Management a few years prior to the research study and included work by authors who were frequently referred to in the literature identified throughout the period of the research.

Reference tracking was undertaken with the publications identified as they were critiqued in detail. A good indication that the original search of the literature was sufficiently wide and penetrating was that there were repeated references in the publications identified in

the search and much cross referencing within the literature collected and subsequent searches during the course of the doctoral work.

The literature was also returned to after the analysis of the data, for comparison of emerging themes and to identify any similarities and differences with the study's findings, as highlighted in Chapter 9.

Management of the literature

All articles were skim read for relevance at the time of searching. Those articles deemed not to be relevant to the research question were discarded. The full text articles were saved and printed out and book chapters were either downloaded or whole books purchased. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education was approached for the hard copies of relevant publications; the publications were downloaded as PDF files but it was preferable to work with the original hard copies as many of them run into dozens of pages each.

Index cards were created for each reference, giving the full reference on the front along with a colour coded cards used for each of empirical research (white), literature review (blue) and policy or position paper (pink). The summary of the method and the findings was then written on the back of the card. An indication of where the paper might be relevant to the research was written on the card – such as 'Historical background of management in HE – Introduction', or 'Chapter on the leadership and management definitions in relation to HE'.

The card system allowed for the references to be placed in subject relevant order or chapter order at any one time and to see where there are themes emerging at an early stage. The complete list of references was also moved into a table format which allowed for easy reference to the type of research undertaken and for grouping into themes. This

highlighted how little original research into the perceptions and aspirations of academics to become a manager in HE there had been in the last decade.

The literature was read in detail and its value was determined by evaluating each article against established criteria (Burns and Grove, 2005: Greenhalgh, 1997 and Smith, 2009).

The themes emerging from the literature are presented in the following chapter and their impact on the research design explained.

3. Literature Review

Five overlapping themes emerged from the literature review and these are explored below.

Definitions of leadership and management in Higher Education

The literature on definitions of leadership, management and administration abounds, some of which is historical but still quoted in the current literature, for example Drucker (1986), Handy (1985) and Klatt and Hiebert (2001) in their books on leadership and management.

Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) in their seminal research on governance, leadership and management in HE, undertaken at the point that polytechnics were to be incorporated into the higher education sector, provide a very helpful distinction based on their review of the literature at the time. They propose that:

...management is about coping with complexity, while leadership is about coping with change. (Middlehurst and Lewis, 1992:1)

They suggest that managers need the skills to organise and maintain order and systems, to ensure that the organisation meets its objectives efficiently and effectively, whereas the leaders need the skills to set the vision and the objectives, to ensure that these are understood by members of the organisation, who are motivated to support the objectives enthusiastically. However, Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) recognised that the managers of departments within a traditional university setting were also leaders of their discipline and there was a tension in managing that potential conflict:

Overall, the role of heads of department, certainly in universities and possibly also in polytechnics is probably the most problematic at present. (Middlehurst and Lewis, 1992:6)

However, they assert that:

...the task of management must in the long run serve that of leadership. (Middlehurst and Lewis, 1992:5).

This position accords closely with Handy's (1985) view that professionals within organisations are autonomous, competent and self-managing. He saw professionals as having psychological contracts where the expectations of the employee are agreed and understood but may be tacit and not necessarily written in detail in a formal contract. In universities traditionally this has been an expectation of the academic's professional conduct. As such it might be considered that little management would be needed in HE except for the maintenance of systems to support the organisation within an overall collegial operating environment.

The conflicting situation within universities as opposed to commercial organisations is that, where there is a potential conflict of goals, the academic is more likely to feel an allegiance with their discipline's aspirations and goals than with those of the organisation. Arnold (2012), a consultant in leadership in HE, reflected that academics view managers and leaders in HE as representing:

the corporatisation of higher education – the dark side. This reflects a widespread, and understandable, discomfort with the new language of students as consumers and the university as an enterprise, and also (perhaps less justified) feeling academics' loyalty should be to their department, not the corporate entity – the university as a whole. (Arnold, 2012:6)

This position is extended to managers according to Bolden et al (2008) in their research of leadership in 12 universities in the UK.

..if a head of school or department is aligned with the discipline rather than the institution, it is unlikely that he/she will either want to or be able to rally support in pursuit of broader organisational objectives. (Bolden et al, 2008:367)

The importance of discipline or subject leadership at the middle management level is therefore a relevant issue. Some managers of departments which incorporate many subject disciplines cannot be a subject or discipline lead in all areas and consequently need to balance this with devolving the subject lead to an academic who is not a manager. The distinction of leadership and management roles which apply to different levels of staff within the university setting therefore becomes more complex to articulate.

A matrix of informal management and leadership potentially emerges in which the subject lead is a senior academic with responsibility for the programmes of study but is not a manager, while the manager who is not a subject lead, takes responsibility for the resource management of the programmes and line management of the staff. The potential for conflicts of interest are apparent in such a situation where the subject lead has no management control of the resources for courses for which they are responsible.

Bolden et al's (2008) LFHE funded study of 12 universities in the UK, included interviews with 154 university leaders in order to explore their views on leadership and how it is structured and practiced to meet the goals of the organisation. The large scale study involved academic and professional service (administrative) staff in both pre and post-1992 universities, although it is noted that the nine pre-1992 universities represented a much larger group than the three post-1992 institutions.

Bolden et al (2008) found a matrix of leadership and management in evidence in HE and described this as varying forms of distributed leadership, without which it would not be possible to run the organisations. However, in all cases this was not without significant challenges.

In all cases a dynamic tension was experienced between the need for collegiality and managerialism, individual autonomy and collective engagement, leadership of the discipline and the institution, academic versus administrative authority, informality and formality, inclusivity and professionalization, and stability and change. (Bolden et al, 2008:364)

Bolden et al (2008) describe leadership in HE as being dependent on five dimensions which influence the way in which the role is delivered. These are:

- personal (the qualities of the individual leader such as inspirational)
- social (the access to networks both internal and external)
- structural (the way in which the university has structured support for leadership such as finance and human resource departments)
- contextual (the cultural and political environment in which the university is operating)
- developmental (the recognition of the temporal nature of leadership and the changing needs of the individual and the organisation)

Bolden et al (2008) conclude that distributed leadership must be accompanied by formal devolved managerial responsibility. They recognise the competing internal forces within universities and the complexity of the leadership roles in this context, describing their findings as showing:

multi-layered, multifaceted nature of leadership in universities and the manner in which individual agency and organisational structure interface at the group level through social capital and social identity. (Bolden 2008:373)

The researchers conclude that there is a hybrid model of leadership operating in HE and that a greater understanding of the five dimensions of leadership and the interface between them will reduce the tensions and conflicting forces within organisations (Bolden et al, 2008).

Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) assert that in the 1980s universities were becoming more managerial due to the changing nature of financial reporting and accountability and that the polytechnics led the way in being more business-like in their approach to the leadership and management of their organisations. Their conclusion was that the balance of leadership and management had not been maintained, which they believed was unsustainable in the future.

In a comprehensive report commissioned by Ernst and Young (a global company providing a range of services including finance, assurance and performance improvement of organisations) on the requirements of academic leadership development, the authors describe leadership in the following way:

At its core, leadership is the capacity to release and engage human potential in the pursuit of common cause. (Moore and Diamond, 2000:2)

More recently, Messick and Kramer (2005), Ramsden (2005) and Marshall (2007) have defined leadership in HE and attempted to distinguish leadership from management, frequently referring to the definition that leadership is 'doing the right things' and management is 'doing the things right', according to Bennis' position in his landmark book of 1989:

Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right. Both roles are crucial, but they differ profoundly. (Bennis 1989:2)

Kallenberg (2007) in his research in the Netherlands on the role of academic middle managers in strategic innovation, defined middle management as:

...the level at which university policies and strategies are effectively translated into practices and concrete actions. (Kallenberg, 2007:21)

Kallenberg (2007) laments the lack of research on the critical role of the middle manager in HE and whilst his focus is on their role in strategic innovation, the literature available on the wider role of the middle manager is also explored in the paper. He states that the middle managers:

..bridge the gap between the visionary ideas of the top and the frequently chaotic reality of the research and teaching staff. (Kallenberg, 2007:22)

He also describes a situation where rotating positions of three year tenure lead to tensions and role conflict in managing academics who were the manager's peers prior to appointment and will again become their peers at the end of the tenure period. This is applicable in many pre-1992 universities and some post-1992 organisations; one of the universities in my study had rotating middle managers, the role challenges of which resonate with Kallenberg's (2007) paper.

Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) undertook a survey of 259 middle managers working in 25 organisations from a wide variety of industries, with a focus on the impact of the middle manager on the organisation's performance. The results showed that middle managers who have boundary spanning roles are more likely to have a higher level of strategic

influence. Whilst the sample was relatively small and relied on self-reporting of influence and role description, the hypotheses being tested were found to be statistically significant.

This finding is of relevance to the study of academic middle managers as they are, by definition, 'boundary spanning'. Their roles include service delivery (teaching), resource management, recruitment of students, relationships with existing and potential external 'customers' and for many the leadership of an academic subject.

An indication of the role of the manager may be found in their title. There is a range of academic middle manager titles used across the sector, including Department Chair (Benoit and Graham 2007; Morris and Miller 2008), Chief Academic Officer (for Dean), (Walseth, 2009) in addition to the more usual term of Head of Department or School. In America the term for the academic manager is, confusingly, administrator (Betts et al, 2009), a term that is commonly used in UK universities to describe the 'professional service employee' or 'support staff' who undertake roles concerning course administration, registry or any other role that is outside the academic career pathway.

The term 'manager-academic' is proposed by Deem (2005 and 2007) as a preferred descriptive title for a manager of academics following her research in the late 1990s on managing contemporary universities in the UK. The title 'manager-academic' has not subsequently been adopted in the HE sector although it does address the potential to misinterpret the title 'academic manager' as a manager of administrators working in an academic context.

Trends in the use of management and leadership titles in HE are apparent in the professional literature. In 2009, a new title was proposed by the Vice Chancellor at my employing university for the lead academic of the newly created departments: 'Departmental Manager', rather than 'Department Manager'. The Departmental Managers in each School were then line managed by the Head of School. It was perhaps no

coincidence that this title later was seen in advertisements for posts at other universities in the sector, but it was disliked by the post holders at my university because they considered that it did not reflect the role. During the course of this research and after significant lobbying of the senior management team, the preferred title 'Academic Department Manager' has been accepted.

Not all research into leadership and management roles in higher education has been focused on academics. Whitchurch (2006) was funded by the LFHE to review the literature in order to explore an understanding of the roles of professional managers in HE who were not academics by background. They were found to have diverse backgrounds where traditional terminology no longer describes their 'quasi-academic' roles.

In a later paper she argues that these roles are not well understood and that there is a need to investigate further the experiences of people undertaking these roles.

Understandings of the roles of professional managers are unclear, particularly those out-with traditional 'specialist' and 'generalist' categories, or those that cross into academic territories. (Whitchurch, 2007: 39)

In her later empirical study, Whitchurch (2008) interviewed 54 professional managers in HEIs in the USA, UK and Australia, exploring their experiences of the role. She concluded from her study that there is a concept of '3rd space professionals' in higher education. These are professionals from mixed backgrounds who traditionally would have been from an administrative background but now these are 'blended professionals' who are academics or external appointments from industry.

This was certainly evidenced in my employing university, with appointments during the course of the research from the commercial sector taking on roles within the 'Enterprise Function' of the university and managed by a senior academic with a military background.

Whitchurch (2008) concludes that the credibility of such appointments lies with the personal background of the individual in relation to the requirements of the role, rather than any academic or administrative experience.

Background and historical overview of leadership and management in HE

There is much written in the literature about the traditions of appointment and the role expectation of middle managers over at least the last two decades both internationally (Santiago et al, 2006; Gibbs et al, 2009; Betts et al, 2009) and in pre and post 1992 Universities in the UK (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Hancock and Hellawell, 2003; Breakwell and Tytherleigh, 2008; Kennie and Woodfield, 2008).

In some 'redbrick' universities and to a lesser extent in the post 1992 universities, the role of the manager is a rotating post, with academics taking a turn to manage their colleagues and the teaching portfolio on a three yearly rotating basis. The findings of Gibbs et al, (2009) illustrate this approach, where the academic returns to researching and teaching their specialist subject after three years in a management role. In their study of 22 departments in 11 world class research intensive universities, they found that there was a pervading collegial approach to management and leadership, fostered by the rotational peer management structure.

In the post 1992 universities however, there is for the majority a view that the introduction of 'new managerialism' or 'new public management' in the early 1990s resulted in a type of approach to management and leadership in HE that was based on a model of central command and control rather than collegiality (Middlehurst, 2004; Milliken and Colohan, 2004; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Deem, 2007; Jones et al, 2012).

Mercer (2009) views this as a result of the 'massification' and 'marketisation' of Higher Education in the UK, the requirement to expand courses and opportunities to study in HE

for a larger number of students and to accommodate a wider range of academic backgrounds. In addition, there has been the introduction of more accountability, through internal and external audit (eg QAA, HEFCE returns, RAE and REF) and an increased demand for efficiency and entrepreneurial activity to attract third stream funding.

In a study by Ameijde et al (2009) focussed on five project teams in one university they noted:

Higher education institutions seem to struggle in dealing with the tensions between traditional collegial notions of leadership and the introduction of management principles derived from the private sector. (Ameijde et al, 2009:777)

Bryman (2007a) undertook a study of 24 academics working in universities and researching leadership in the higher education or business context. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The result was a picture of the tension in attempting to maintain a collegiate approach in the management of HE where the paradox is in the management of those traditionally viewed as autonomous practitioners:

The significance of fostering a collegiate climate of mutual supportiveness and the maintenance of autonomy do seem to be particular desiderata in the academic context. (Bryman, 2007a)

Bryman (2007b) concluded, from his research of academic leadership, that academics are different to other professional groups in relation to how they can be led and managed and he cautions against the new managerial approach in creating an environment in which staff support a university to thrive. He also provides a list of the facets of leadership at all levels in the management hierarchy including:

Providing direction, creating a structure to support direction, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment, establishing trustworthiness as a leader, having personal integrity, having credibility to act as a role model, facilitating participation in decision-making; consultation, providing communication about developments, representing the department/institution to advance its cause(s) and networking on its behalf; respecting existing culture while seeking to instil values through a vision for the department/institution, protecting staff autonomy. (Bryman, 2007b:2)

There is also a warning against leadership behaviours which will be detrimental to the effectiveness of management and leadership in HE:

Failing to consult; not respecting existing values; actions that undermine collegiality; not promoting the interests of those for whom the leader is responsible; being uninvolved in the life of the department/institution; undermining autonomy; allowing the department/institution to drift. (Bryman, 2007b:3)

Bryman's (2007b) extensive literature review and interviews provide a clear picture of the expectations of leadership behaviour. The sample of 24 academics who were interviewed however, were selected for their experience in researching leadership in HE, rather than experience in a management or a leadership role in HE. It is interesting therefore that there was a significant emphasis on collegiality and the respect for autonomy by leaders in HE.

Jameson (2012) argues that the most successful universities in a time of recession will be those which are able to develop 'negative capability', to engender trust and to demonstrate a values-based leadership. That is, leaders in universities need to manage uncertainty positively, build trust, both internally and externally, and work in an open, respectful, honest and engaging way with staff and students.

Jameson (2012) drew on a range of academic sources over a period of three years including interviews with vice chancellors, an online questionnaire and a focus group of academics with a variety of roles. She found a significant loss of trust amongst staff internally and evidence that universities under the new government policy had become:

...increasingly hierarchical, bureaucratic, competitive and enterprising organisational cultures in the recession. (Jameson, 2012:402)

The findings applied to both pre and post-1992 universities and Jameson identified that there was agreement on the type of value-based leadership required, which included attributes such as integrity, optimism, humour, openness, honesty; skills such as managing ambiguity, coping with change, and effective decision making, engaging with staff and being able to articulate clear values and engender teamwork. There was also a need for leaders to exercise what she termed 'boundary management' in the protection of the university culture at times of rapid external change and the generation of trust and optimism:

...when both future provision for students and staff are in doubt, the capability to manage uncertainty in generating trust and optimism for the future is a key leadership attribute. (Jameson, 2012:410)

Jameson (2012) argues for the leaders and managers to create 'negative capability', that is, they need to resist the temptation to react in haste to the rapidly changing environment in HE policy change and take time with their teams to reflect on the best way to respond to the changes.

Santiago et al (2006) describe the changed approach to the management of Higher Education in Portugal and the critical role of the middle manager in delivering the change:

Arguably one of the most important groups of academic managers impacted by the managerialist push are *[sic]* those charged with the stewardship of the basic academic units: departments/schools and faculties. (Santiago et al, 2006:216)

The researchers undertook a study of 58 academic middle managers in Portugal in order to determine the changing nature of their role in the context of the way in which universities are being managed. The self-completion questionnaire included questions on their perceptions of their role and what aspects of their work gave them the most satisfaction. The results demonstrated that teaching and research gave the most satisfaction and managers experienced some ambiguity with their roles. The researchers concluded:

This group of Portuguese academic managers appear to be at best reluctant managers, experiencing a number of conflicting expectations and often desiring to spend more time on things other than managerial. (Santiago et al, 2006: 242)

Gibbs et al (2009) describe the teaching leadership role of the middle manager in higher education in their global study concerned with leadership of teaching excellence in 22 departments in 11 universities involving 8 countries. It was notable that the heads of department in each area studied:

...were unusually likely to have been respected for their outstanding teaching or to be teaching award winners at institutional or even national level.

(Gibbs et al, 2009: 2)

This finding of the study supports the notion that the primary reason for entry into academia is teaching and that some managers are able to maintain this focus personally and develop a department which reaches world class recognition for its teaching.

Betts et al (2009) describe the situation in America in their position paper on HE administration in the USA. They provide evidence that the expansion of HE and the increased number of students has led to an urgent need to provide succession planning and to create clear career paths and support for academics wishing to move into a management position. They cite Davis (2008):

There is simply no structural focus on leadership. So what do colleges do? First they seduce someone into becoming a department chair, then a dean, then a provost or a vice president of academic affairs, and eventually a president. Is there any required management or leadership training in the process? Not consistently. Is there any rigorous and continuing assessment of management ability? Not consistently. (Davis, 2008:64, cited by Betts et al, 2009)

The authors recommend to the HE sector that there is a focus on developing a career path with support for management and leadership skills development at all stages, a commitment to succession planning and an increase in diversity amongst the managers and leaders. (Betts et al, 2009)

In the UK, Hancock and Hellawell (2003) in their study of 14 academic middle managers in one post 1992 university, identify that the changing context of higher education has led to institutional changes and new skills required by middle managers. They describe the need for managers to become more entrepreneurial and creative about business development due to budgetary constraints:

As the unit of resource shrinks year on year, there is also resentment at being told to make bricks with what is considered insufficient straw, resulting in what is perceived by many middle managers to be a loss of quality. (Hancock and Hellawell, 2003:7)

They describe their findings of middle managers acting covertly when developing new business and enterprise in order to retain a competitive advantage both internally and externally. Whilst this study concerned just one university, the findings resonated heavily with my own experience in HE management and it provides some insight and a point of discussion for other HEIs on the ways in which middle managers are responding to the changing context of HE.

When reporting on the wider findings of the study Hellowell and Hancock (2001) conclude that academic middle managers are expected to be:

... at least as much resource managers and fund-raising entrepreneurs as they are academic leaders. (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001:191)

They conclude that whilst some levels of collegiality in management practices were still evident, there was concern that this would not be sustainable in the longer term.

Deem and Brehony (2005) reviewed the position of managers in HE taking an approach of new managerialism in response to the changes in HE policy and concluded that:

..almost all of them [*managers*] are drawing on and using, in some way, a general ideology of new-managerialism, though only a few embrace every aspect. (Deem and Brehony, 2005:230)

Clegg and McAuley (2005) in their review of the literature relating to the concept of middle management in HE assert that the debate has been too simplistically focussed on managerialism versus collegiality and they propose that:

Imagining more productive relationships in higher education, in ways that do not look back nostalgically backwards to an older, more elitist system, may be part of

the first steps towards realising universities as more humane places in which to practice. (Clegg and McAuley, 2005:13)

This position is supported by Ferlie et al (2008) when reviewing the literature on the steering of HE systems in relation to public management policy and they make a case for more empirical research into the effectiveness of management approaches in HE.

Many critics of NPM [*New Public Management*] similarly engage in normative rather than empirical argument: NPM will destroy participation and collegiality and emphasises quantity rather than quality. (Ferlie et al, 2008:343)

Woodfield and Kennie (2008) however highlight that there are issues with demonstrating the effectiveness of management approaches in the HE sector.

Measuring performance and defining success is often much more complex and multidimensional than in a conventional business context.....There is also a tendency to measure what is easy to measure rather than what is more appropriate. (Woodfield and Kennie, 2008: 409)

Kennie and Woodfield (2008) undertook an extensive study examining the structure and function of the top management teams in HEIs and involved interviews with members of the top teams in 17 HEIs in the UK. Part of their research included an examination of the changing nature of management roles in HE which reflect the changing context and operation of higher education. They identified positions in post 1992 HEIs such as 'Director of strategic international business partnerships' and 'Director of projects' which reflect the way in which HEIs have become more business development focussed.

Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2008) examined the way in which Vice Chancellors were selected and supported to develop their skills. Their research included interviews with 13 Vice Chancellors and they concluded that:

There are changes in the demands levelled at VCs during the term of their office. This lifecycle entails different competencies at different points in its cycle, preparation for the variability in the job over time is necessary. This means that preparation for being a Vice Chancellor does not end when someone becomes one. (Breakwell and Tytherleigh, 2008:46)

The researchers found that the competencies of the Vice Chancellors included being academically credible, having business skills including financial acumen; being able to exercise and delegate management and leadership responsibilities; demonstrating personal characteristics which include stamina, self-confidence and being an excellent communicator; coping with a duality of external and internal role; having a flexible and situation dependent leadership style and the ability to instigate and manage change.

It is notable that the principle characteristics of the Vice Chancellor have remarkable similarity with those of the middle manager in HE, which are described in Chapter Eight, albeit that the Vice Chancellors are managing at a more strategic level.

The response to the changing nature of an external environment and the capacity to respond in terms of governance was an issue raised by Middlehurst and Lewis (1992). They examined the differences in leadership and management of the established universities and the polytechnics which were developing into the 'new' universities at the time and concluded that the hierarchical style of the polytechnic was unsustainable.

In relation to the hierarchical style of the polytechnics and the emerging loss of the cybernetic, collegiate system of governance in the established HEIs, they concluded:

...HEIs have bought their short term survival by mortgaging their long term future.
(Middlehurst and Lewis 1992:7)

Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) predicted that universities would not thrive in the long term if they did not maintain a collegiate approach both to the way in which the staff were led and managed and to the way in which their systems and approaches to leadership, management and administration were designed.

More than a decade later Middlehurst (2004) analysed the political and economic context of higher education, concluding that:

...the operating environment for universities will remain volatile, complex and increasingly demanding at all levels of the institution. (Middlehurst, 2004:270)

Middlehurst's paper is focussed on the changes needed in structures and systems in the governance of the HE sector, which was facing at the time enormous changes implemented in response to the Higher Education Act, 2004. The Act included measures to increase participation in university education with the explicit aim of meeting a 50% target of the 18-30 year olds in the population engaging in HE by 2010 and the lifting of the cap on tuition fees (Middlehurst, 2004).

Middlehurst identified that in order to meet the anticipated demand there was a need for structural revisions within universities.

Strong strategic capacity, integrated management systems, swift and flexible decision making capabilities and dispersed leadership throughout the organisation.
(Middlehurst, 2004:270)

Middlehurst (2004) also called for diversification in income streams, a move away from dependency on the state funding of HE and an entrepreneurial culture throughout the university. Whilst the specific skills, knowledge and attributes of managers in supporting the changes were not addressed, such fundamental changes of orientation and structure would logically require some professional development within the management and leadership team.

Jones et al (2012) argue that after a decade of hierarchical approaches to leadership in Australian universities, in order to thrive, the HE sector requires a distributed leadership approach to its governance. Their study of four universities in Australia demonstrated that the collaboration of a distributed leadership approach is needed between professional service staff, the executive team members and academic communities in order to realise and implement change successfully.

Distributed leadership in education has been defined in a variety of ways in the literature (Bennett et al, 2003; Harris and Spillane, 2008), including recognition that there is a wider leadership contribution to be made in an organisation from those who are not in formal leadership positions:

A distributed perspective on leadership acknowledges the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice, whether or not they are formally designated or defined as leaders. (Harris and Spillane, 2008: 31)

There is recognition therefore that there may be many people involved in leadership within an organisational setting with a variety of roles and this triangulates with the notion of a matrix approach to management and leadership referred to when defining leadership and management in HE in the previous section.

Why academics become middle managers

Research has demonstrated that middle managers in a variety of contexts and organisations are challenged by their roles, not just in higher education. The current complexity of the role with, stressful, boundary spanning work, long hours and an environment of constant interruption describes the middle manager world (Martin, 2007).

This picture is drawn from the results of a survey of 350 middle managers working in global organisations around the world and it concludes that there is a need for the employers to prepare and support middle managers to cope with the demands of their role. Martin (2007) recommends the provision of a mentor and support for the development of skills and attributes which include relationship and interpersonal skills development, team building and communication skills.

Such a stressful picture of middle management leads to the question of why an academic would choose to apply for a role as a middle manager. Indeed, the review of the literature by Hotho et al (2008) demonstrated that there was a pervading view of management being alien to the work of academics and academic leadership being conceived as aligned with corporate rather than academic or discipline specific goals.

The area of motivation to enter management in higher education has been researched extensively by Deem et al (2007) and Deem (2007). The research team undertook focus group interviews with a number of discipline groups, interviewed 135 manager-academics and 29 senior administrators in 16 universities in the UK; this was followed by case studies of 4 universities.

The conclusion was that there are, broadly, three reasons for academics to become managers: for the increased salary and status – the 'career manager'; to make improvements in the working environment and conditions for the academics managed -

'the reluctant manager'; or the desire to give something back to the institution, often later in the career - 'the good citizen' manager (Deem et al, 2007).

Floyd (2011) confirmed Deem's findings in his life history based study of 17 academic middle managers and their reasons for becoming managers. Whilst this was a much smaller scale study undertaken in one post-1992 university, the results were in line with Deem's seminal work undertaken over a decade earlier and published in 2007.

The managers' reasons for becoming a middle manager included planned career development, increased personal flexibility and control over the working environment, ensuring that others were not appointed who were unable to do the job and making changes to the environment to more closely align with their personal values. Several managers also described situations where they were persuaded by senior managers to apply for the positions.

The findings of Bolden et al's (2008) study of 154 leaders in HE also referred to the pathways which led academics to become leaders and found that while there may have been an initial resistance to accepting the role, they later enjoyed the opportunity for influence. However, this area was not the main aim of the study and arguably the 'resistance' referred to would have related to those in rotational leadership positions in the more established universities, rather than those who have applied for a permanent managerial or leadership position.

There has been no literature identified which involves a focus on the aspirations of current academics to become managers and what academics believe makes a good manager in relation to their knowledge, skills and attributes. This supports the case for exploring within this doctoral research their perceptions of management and their aspirations to become managers.

The knowledge, skills and attributes required by middle managers in Higher Education

The knowledge, skills and attributes required by the middle manager in HE have been proposed following a number of studies which have examined the experience of middle managers in higher education. Benoit and Graham (2005) undertook interviews with 13 academic department chairs in one university with 4 campuses in the USA. Twelve were professors and 12 were male. The skills required for the middle management role fell into four areas of the role: administration, leadership, interpersonal skills and resource development. It was concluded that:

...chair roles are complex and no single individual can be skilled at all the roles.

(Benoit and Graham, 2005:6)

Santiago et al (2006) undertook a survey of academic managers in universities in Portugal, with a response rate of 26%. They describe the managers as professors in charge of departments who demonstrated a lack of experience in administration and management, a lack of dispersion in decision making powers and a natural tension between collegial and managerial approaches to managing in HE.

The experience of a new middle manager (department chair) has been described by Jones (2007) who provides a checklist of behaviours based on discussions with professionals thrust into management roles in higher education without any formal preparation. These are summarised as:

- having a clear vision for the department based on the goals of the organisation
- articulate your role clearly
- understand the university's policies
- keep up with emails and voicemails
- plan carefully to meet deadlines

- work for the wider recognition of the department or faculty and the staff within it
- support and mentor others in the department
- network with and seek feedback from peers
- meet regularly with the Dean/line manager
- keep some protected time each week for planning and administration
- understand the wider context and operations of the department and faculty

This behavioural approach is supported by McCroskey (2008) who applied Kouzes and Posner's (2002) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) in relation to describing the requisite behaviours in managing and leading higher education. The LPI was created by Kouzes and Posner by engaging leaders from a variety of organisations in surveys and interviews and is frequently referred to in the literature as a seminal piece in describing leadership behaviours in successful organisations.

Based on the LPI, McCroskey (2008) proposes that middle managers in HE need to adhere to the five key behaviours, summarised as:

- model the way (e.g. clarify personal values and align with actions and shared values)
- inspire a shared vision (e.g. imagine possibilities and appeal to shared aspirations)
- challenge the process (e.g. seek innovative ways to grow, change and improve)
- enable others to act (e.g. build trust, promote co-operative goals, share power)
- encourage the heart (e.g. create a spirit of community, show appreciation)

However, McCroskey (2008) does not account for the potential barriers and complexity of the context of HE when applying this model, nor how leaders and managers in HE might be enabled to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes to deliver such leadership behaviours.

Inman (2007), following her interviews with 28 middle managers in HE about their careers and the development they received to assist with their role, suggests a formal structured programme, a forum for sharing of experiences with a peer group and formal mentoring.

The middle management forum or support group is also suggested by Hotho et al (2008), whilst Jamali's (2005) review of prescribed development programmes suggests that any formal orthodox management programmes may need to be amended to accommodate the fast changing pace of businesses and organisations.

Middlehurst (2008) on her position paper on the gap between leadership theory and practice in HE asserts that support for leadership development needs to be contextualised and more research is required to support practice.

Leadership development needs to be built not on generic leadership competency frameworks but on tailored processes that recognise the contingent, relational and negotiated reality of HE leadership. (Middlehurst, 2008:337)

Deem (2006) identified the lack of research data on which to base training courses for managers in HE, although Wisniewski (2007) offers a review on the effectiveness of an internal leadership development programme offered at the University of Wisconsin in 1999, from both the perspective of the participants and their supervisors. Such was the effectiveness of the programme that Wisniewski (2007) provides a comprehensive content of the programme in the article. This is however, one small study in one university in the USA and the results may not be generalisable to the context of middle management in the UK.

The effectiveness of the programme is related to the way in which the programme was devised, using a 'bottom up' approach to the development of leadership competencies. Taking a Grounded Theory approach, Wisniewski (2007) interviewed leaders and

managers participating in an internal leadership development programme and asked for critical incidents where their leadership behaviour had been effective.

From this data, 26 leadership abilities were defined which were then grouped under seven competencies:

- Development of a core set of values
- Effective communication
- Reflection and analysis
- Creating a positive climate
- Facilitation and collaboration
- Problem solving and risk taking
- Perseverance

(Wisniewski, 2007:9)

The internal leadership programme which is based on the above competences is clearly leadership rather than management focussed and there is no explicit reference to managing people or financial budgets within the programme (Wisniewski 2007). However, the principle of asking the leaders for their experiences and critical incidents when devising competencies for a leadership programme may be usefully applied to the development of middle management programmes in HE.

However, according to Bennis (1984) formal leadership and management courses are not the answer to development of skills and competence.

Leaders are not made by corporate courses, any more than they are made by their college courses, but by experience. Therefore it is not devices such as 'career path planning' or training courses, that are needed, but an organization's commitment to providing its potential leaders with opportunities to learn through

experience in an environment that permits growth and change. (Bennis, 1984:182, cited by Gaither, 2007)

The need for development and support for the role of the academic manager was explored by Gaither (2007) who examined the literature on leadership development needs in higher education. He proposed that support for leadership development programmes such as the Kellogg Leadership project (USA) should be provided as managers and leaders need to continually reflect and learn to be effective within a changing political and economic context.

Gaither (2007) also concludes that leadership and management skills can be taught.

Thus, current leadership theory suggests that leaders are not necessarily born, they can be made; it is not events but individual will that more often makes a leader. (Gaither, 2007:5)

Whilst there is reference to the need for development and support of the middle manager in the literature, there is a lack of empirical studies focussed on the knowledge, skills and attributes required by middle managers in HE when they are selected and appointed. This confirms the rationale for the research which examines these elements from the perspective of 26 middle managers.

Walseth (2009), in her review of published advertisements for dean positions suggests that there is a lack of specific attributes required for the role, with more generic requirements such as a doctorate, teaching experience, scholarship and commitment to the values of the organisation. Walseth (2009) argues that with the increasingly complex role of the academic leader and manager, there should be a clear articulation of the skills required for the role.

It is also proposed that universities should focus efforts on succession planning and the early identification of potential leaders in the academic community, in addition to support and training for new and existing leaders and managers in HE (Walseth, 2009).

There is descriptive literature on the range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) available to middle managers in the UK, including informal as well as formal accredited training. Coe (2005) provides a compilation of leadership and management courses available to leaders and managers in HE but provides no evaluation of the effectiveness of the programmes available which is arguably the single most important issue when reviewing and selecting development programmes. In addition, such compilations quickly become out of date as courses and content change in response to demand and subsequent curriculum development.

Lefoe et al (2007) describe an initiative for leadership CPD at a university in Australia based on a previous successful model of teaching development. A small number of leaders from two universities in the region were brought together on a residential leadership programme and their subsequent learning was supported with action learning sets. The programme was based on a model of distributed leadership and authentic learning with the support of a mentor. Later, those who have completed the development programme mentor subsequent students.

The model is predicated on shared learning and requires the participation and learning of at least one other university. In the UK the LFHE provides a similar model for middle management, bringing small action learning sets together after a residential programme. This approach is supported by Jamali (2005) who states that such an approach to the development and support of management skills is required in response to the new management paradigm of the 21st century. The latter Jamali (2005) characterises as one in which organisations are in a constant state of change and reflection on and analysis of relevant work based scenarios are paramount to addressing the skills deficit in managers.

Burgoyne et al (2009) were commissioned by the LFHE to undertake a study to investigate the investment of UK universities into leadership and management development and their impact on the organisation. The researchers' underlying principle was that investment in leadership development increases leadership capability and the performance of the university – which is the rationale behind the establishment of the LFHE.

Literature from the public and private sectors was also reviewed to determine what constitutes 'best practice' leadership development. The authors conclude that there is much to be learned from the success of the private sector where investment into leadership development has been proved to result in successful performance and growth within the organisations (Burgoyne et al, 2009). It may be argued however that there are many other factors besides investment in leadership and management which may contribute to the success or failure of organisations.

Burgoyne et al (2009) propose that there should be an investment in leadership development within HE, starting with the selection process which should include an assessment of emotional intelligence, an acceptance of the need for collegiality and the skills to mentor less experienced staff. The support of leaders is equally as important as is the creation and maintenance of an organisational climate conducive to learning to lead (Hill, 2005, cited by Burgoyne et al, 2009).

The National Occupational Standards on Management and Leadership (UK Commission on Employment and Skills (UKCES) 2008) are freely available online but there is no evidence in the literature explored that they have been systematically utilised to inform a framework for HE leadership and management development programmes. National Occupational Standards provide a specific description of the skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviours expected at various levels of management and leadership.

The suite of standards related to management and leadership have been developed with the support of practitioners – that is, leaders and managers, but it may be argued that they have not been revised for the last 7 years and are too generic to be helpful in specific areas of practice.

In my experience of HE the National Occupational Standards are not universally recognised in the sector as being useful to the development of HE level programmes. The standards have been historically associated with programmes at a Further Education level and those programmes in HE which are preparing students for a specific profession, such as nursing.

Changing language in Higher Education

Changes in relation to titles and the terminology used for current issues in HE appear to occur collectively in the sector, possibly through the Vice Chancellors (VCs) with their collective body memberships such as UUK, Million + and Guild HE and often being noted in the professional press.

There is evidence of the changes in terms used across the sector emerging in the literature and in practice simultaneously. Examples are:

- use of the term 'employee' instead of 'staff'. This was observed in the weekly sector publication The Times Higher Education (THE) in 2009 and introduced in my employing university later in the same year.
- use of the term 'Professional Service Employee' to describe the administrative staff working in areas such as course administration, registry, marketing, finance and human resources. This was observed in THE in late 2009 but had been introduced in my employing university in early 2009. It is a term used in Kennie and Woodfield (2008) in their extensive study of university senior management teams and structures.

- use of the term 'student experience' which was observed in THE in 2007/8 and introduced by my employing university in relation to roles, such as Director of Student Experience, in 2009. This is now a role title which is widely used in the sector.
- use of the terms 'enterprise' and 'business management' across the sector. This was observed in THE in 2007/8 and introduced in my employing university in relation to roles at the faculty level, such as Dean of Enterprise and Business Management, in 2009.

Vice Chancellors and their senior management team appear to collectively mirror the restructuring of their respective universities, utilising similar titles for similar roles. The leadership and influence of collective bodies of vice chancellors and university senior leaders was noted two decades ago by Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) in their study on leadership and management in HE. It is possible therefore that there may also be a collective view of the role definition and expectation of knowledge, skills and attributes at the level of the Head of School or Department across the sector.

Conclusion of the literature review

Key concepts and debates in the literature have been drawn upon in the support of the study and also in the formulation and refinements of the research questions. The concept of matrix management as a response to the swiftly changing environment of HE was easily recognisable in my workplace at the time of the research. However, there is evidence that matrix management also leads to the potential for internal and external conflict being experienced in the increasingly complex middle management role, as managers endeavour to understand the boundaries of authority and influence.

The key debates included those of collegiality versus new public management and the potential consequences of these approaches to HE. There was a suggestion within the literature that there would be a difference in the management approaches in the post 1992

HEIs and the established universities but this comparison was outside the parameters of the study.

The debates concerning management in HE as a career pathway, the potential discord with an academic career in teaching and research, understanding the challenges of succession planning and the support middle manager development were all influential in shaping the study.

The literature review confirmed the lack of recently published empirical research on the subject of middle management in HE and further confirmed the relevance of the research questions. In the rapidly changing context of HE, it is essential for the sector to develop robust evidence for the knowledge, skills and attributes required for the role of middle manager. In addition, the study is relevant to succession planning in HE: the ways in which potential middle managers can be identified and their skills and knowledge most appropriately supported to develop will be explored.

The review of the literature focussed the questions for the research. There was no research identified which provided specific and current empirical evidence for the perception of the middle managers and the academic community of the knowledge, skills and attributes required for the academic middle management role.

The reasons for academics moving to a management role were well documented in the large scale study of 1998 by Deem et al and the later study by Floyd (2011). There is an opportunity however to explore this area for consistency of findings and to determine whether any different reasons could be identified by the managers included in this small doctoral study.

The development of the manager's knowledge, skills and attributes for the role and how they experienced any changes and new demands after being appointed to a management

post were not well explored in the literature. However, the literature review provided evidence of the support and development needs of managers which required some updating in the light of the rapidly changing context of higher education and the economic recession.

Given the literature describing the role of the middle manager as one which is somewhat distanced from the academic teaching and research role, it was also considered important to explore the consequences of the management role on the individual's teaching and research activities.

In relation to succession planning, research pertaining to the aspirations and motivations of academics to pursue a management role were not found in the literature reviewed. This was considered to be an important part of understanding the reasons for academics to pursue a management career and to determine why they may or may not consider this an appealing career pathway.

Accessing the academic community in the study also provided an opportunity to explore their views of the essential knowledge, skills and attributes for an academic middle manager and to determine whether there was any synergy with the managers' views.

The next chapter provides an exploration of the research approach selected in designing the study to answer the research questions.

4. Research Approach

The research questions were:

1. How do academic middle managers perceive their role?
2. What are the requisite knowledge, skills and attributes of the academic middle manager and how and when are these acquired?
3. What are the consequences of being an academic middle manager in relation to participation in teaching and research?

In an attempt to provide some additional context for the study, the following subsidiary questions were also proposed:

- i) What are the perceptions within HE of the academic middle manager's role?
- ii) What are the motivations and aspirations of academics to become managers?

These questions were identified through an iterative process, following the literature review and my own recent experience in HE.

In considering the choice of approach to the research design and data collection methods, Starks and Trinidad (2007) have a clear message:

A judicious choice of method guides the research toward the intended aims of the research and helps ensure that its products are useful and well received. (Starks and Trinidad 2007:1372)

In order to answer the first three questions, a qualitative approach to the research design was needed. Such an approach in research provides the opportunity to explore human experiences, behaviours and views and it is within this discipline that the specific approach of grounded theory is located (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).

A rationalistic approach to answering these first three research questions would not be appropriate because the questions require a detailed exploration of experiences and views. The methods associated with the rationalistic approach include randomised controlled trials which test hypotheses (Burns and Grove, 2005).

The purpose of this research was to explore middle managers' views and to develop an in-depth understanding rather than to test a hypothesis. The literature review had highlighted that there has been little research specifically looking at these research questions, so an approach which is small scale and flexible was required.

Rationalistic approaches are more closely associated with numeric data collection, rather than narrative data. Whilst some numeric or quantitative data was expected in the design of the study, it was anticipated that the research data would comprise mainly analytic data about the subjective views of the academics rather than data which supports or refutes a hypothesis or a null hypothesis. Based on the first three research questions, the selected approach was a mode of the grounded theory method (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).

In relation to the fourth and fifth research questions, less in-depth responses were required and it was decided that a survey approach to answering these questions would be most appropriate. In this way, access to a large number of academics would be enabled and a wide range of questions posed (Sapsford, 2007).

This mixed methods approach to answering the overall aim of the research is explored next (Plowright, 2011). The analysis covers the approach selected from within the grounded theory method and also the use of the survey approach to answer the research questions. The applicability of the two different approaches to the research questions is also explored.

Grounded Theory Method

Grounded theory method (GTM) is an approach to answering questions in research which holds at its centre the principle that the data will be grounded in the real world and will be generated from the real world (Charmaz, 2000). Furthermore, when using this approach, the way in which the sample is selected, the data are collected and the analyses undertaken are all guided by the use of GTM.

GTM is based on the theory of symbolic interactionism and social constructivism (Charmaz, 2000). Symbolic interactionism assumes that there is a dynamic relationship between individuals and society. People construct and reconstruct the meaning of reality in a constant interaction with the self and others and this is the focus for the theory generation in GTM. This research is concerned with the experiences of middle managers in HE and their understanding of their roles and the meanings they give to their experiences in their roles, which is an ideal context for the application of GTM.

Phenomenology might have been the approach of choice if the research questions were focussed on the 'lived experience' of the middle managers in HE and if there was an attempt to give a detailed description of how it feels to be a manager and an exploration of this day-to-day lived experience (Starks and Trinidad, 2007). However, the focus is on the middle managers' perception of their role and their views of the knowledge, skills and attributes required for the role; the grounded theory approach was therefore selected because of its synergy with the purpose of the research.

There are however many schools of thought about the interpretation of the original GTM as proposed by the originators of the method Glaser and Strauss (1967). The debate in the literature regarding the divergent *modes* of GTM were examined in some detail in order to determine the mode of GTM to be selected and applied to the research to be conducted (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).

A paper by Fendt and Sachs (2008) was helpful in supporting the decision to select a mode of GTM relevant to the research. Their paper was written specifically for students selecting this method for their doctoral research. They suggest that researchers, rather than adhering rigorously to the positions of one GTM theorist, should select aspects of GTM from various theorists, such as those explored by Bryant and Charmaz (2007a). The following discussion explores the various modes of GTM available and the selection of the mode most appropriate for the study.

In the original GTM (Glaser and Strauss 1967) there was a belief that new theories would be 'discovered' by the application of GTM in research studies. This logically means that there is an assumed existence of a theory (new knowledge) which is awaiting discovery through the research. The theory 'exists' prior to the research being undertaken and is not constructed by the research, but rather is 'discovered' during the process of undertaking the research (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).

Glaser has remained with this view throughout his continued discussions and position statements on GTM. However, a growing number of scholars have put forward differing views which are based on a constructivist epistemology – that all knowledge is constructed socially (Annells, 1997; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a). Within this interpretation of the GTM a theory does not exist prior to the research being undertaken and by virtue of undertaking the data collection and analysis, the theory will be constructed.

The emergent concept of social constructivism was influenced by symbolic interactionism and it developed as an 'anti-realist doctrine' which is characterised by the belief that knowledge and social action and social processes are inextricably linked (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007b). Truth or reality is considered to be socially constructed, both individually and collectively. There are therefore multiple versions of the truth which

change over time and with subsequent interactions and experiences, so logically there can be no such thing as an objective reality.

In relation to the research into middle management in HE, the knowledge generated through this research will assist in understanding the experiences of the managers; this will be their reality. Corbin and Strauss' (2008) view is that the reality sought by social inquiry will be relative and a product of interpretation – an inquirer's construction.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) also assert that the researcher is an essential participant in the research process and they encourage the use of the researcher's own experiences and acquired knowledge to advantage, rather than seeing this as problematic in the interpretation of the data. In the context of this study, I have been mindful of the potential influence of my experiences as a middle manager in HE when undertaking the interviews and the analysis of the data.

The use of memo writing is proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) so that the researcher addresses their own reflections on the research process and their potential to have influenced the outcomes. Throughout the study, I made notes of instances and observations from day-to-day practice which has proved helpful in triangulating the data collected through the formal interviews.

Annells' (1997b) position supports multiple paradigms of inquiry currently in qualitative research and that there are multiple modes of GTM. She produced a list of 6 issues to be considered in relation to the selection of Grounded Theory and the mode of GTM: two are related to the selection of GTM and four to the mode within GTM.

The two basic issues for the selection of GTM are an appropriate inquiry focus and practical considerations. In relation to the focus of the inquiry Annells (1997b) proposes that this should be a social process, social structure and social interaction with the

intention to understand patterns and relationships between them and the meaning given to these.

In relation to the research study the managers to be interviewed are a part of a social structure (the university management structure) which has a social process (how all elements of the structure relate to each other in the delivery of the role) and they experience social interaction (their views on the interaction and its meaning for them).

In relation to practical considerations, Annells (1997b) states that research using a GTM approach is time consuming and should not be hurried. It may take many months to refine the theory around the core category and mentoring is needed.

The research study allowed for the data to be collected over several months. The main study (May 2011 to March 2012) took place after reflections on the experience of the pilot study (February to March 2011) and mentoring was provided throughout by my supervisor.

Annells (1997b) also states that there are four basic issues for the selection of the mode of GTM. The first is the researcher's personal philosophical perspectives regarding inquiry. The position of both Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Bryant and Charmaz (2007b) accords with my belief that reality is socially constructed and that the work should have an outcome that is pragmatic and helps to manage a problem.

The second basic issue concerns the intended product of the inquiry. The intention should be to gain an understanding which will be useful for action and practice (Annells, 1997b). The research I undertook examined the perspective and experiences of the middle manager in HE. The improved understanding of their experiences in relation to the knowledge, skills and attributes required by the manager in HE will have a practical application related to the selection, recruitment and support of middle managers in HE.

The third basic issue is the theoretical underpinning and whether traditional symbolic interactionism fits well with the inquiry (Annells, 1997b). This is considered to be the case as in preparing for the research, I was privileged to experience managers in HE sharing their experiences in terms of the meanings of interactions with people, how they have dealt with the demands of the job and how their approaches to the role have been changed by the experience of the interactions they have had.

Lastly, Annells (1997b) presents the dual crises of representation and legitimation and asks the researcher to consider to what extent the voice of the 'other' will be heard in the research report. In addition, she questions whether a 'found' social world (the original GTM) or a created social world (such as that described by Corbin and Strauss in 2008) is to be explored, how the research findings will be legitimised and how judgements will be made about the rigour of the study in terms of its trustworthiness.

In relation to representation, the research allows for the voice of the 'other' to be heard through the use of the words of the respondents to support the presentation of the findings. With regard to rigour and legitimation, the study was undertaken in accordance with a strictly auditable account of the research process detailed at each step.

The conclusion after exploring these issues was that the original Glaser and Strauss (1967) GTM will not be observed in the research as it is considered impossible to adhere to the view that there is an objective reality which currently exists, is grounded in the data and is going to be discovered through the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007b).

The position of Lomborg and Kirkevold (2003) also supports this approach. They maintain that whilst the original GTM assumptions about truth and reality were taken for granted and were not explored, there is a way in which theories generated by GTM can be assessed for truth and reality. They suggest that the four criteria originally proposed by

Glaser and Strauss (1967) of 'work', 'relevance', 'fit' and 'modifiability' can be used to support the 'fitness' of a the data analysis and theory generated.

They propose that fit is the main criterion for assessment, supported by work, relevance and modifiability (Lomborg and Kirkevold, 2003):

Fit is concerned with ensuring that the categories emerge from the data and there are none that are pre-determined. In relation to the research study, there were no categories into which the data was placed; categories emerged from the analysis of the data.

Work is concerned with the theories generated providing predictions, explanations and interpretations of what is happening in the situation under investigation.

Relevance of the research relates to the theories being 'relevant to action' in the situation under investigation. In presenting the research at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2013 annual conference there was an agreement that the findings had indeed focussed on views of the core relevant issues of middle management in HE.

Modifiability of the research refers to theories generated by GTM being subject to change as new data emerge, creating qualifications to the theory. There is an acknowledgement that any theory generated is contextually situated and temporally bound.

Lomborg and Kirkevold (2003) maintain that there was a lack of clarity in the original GTM concerning how the researcher can ensure the quality of the theory generated, whilst Morse et al (2002) state that it is the researcher's responsibility to maintain the rigour throughout the study rather than to rely on external verification of findings. They propose that returning the completed study findings to the people who contributed to the research is problematic because:

..study results have been synthesized, decontextualized, and abstracted from (and across) individual participants, so there is no reason for individuals to be able to recognize themselves or their particular experiences. (Morse et al, 2002:7)

Criteria have since been put forward by Lincoln and Guba (2007) based on the original proposals of Guba (1981). These provide an established means of assuring the validity and the reliability (or the trustworthiness) of the research findings in research taking a naturalistic approach and these will be applied to the research study, as appropriate. The criteria by which the trustworthiness of the research can be judged according to Lincoln and Guba (2007) are described within the areas of *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability* of the research.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) propose criteria which can be applied to the research to assess to what extent the research has come as close as possible to the truth about the issue being studied. They propose 10 criteria to assess the validity, reliability and credibility of the research process (Corbin and Strauss 2008:305) which are derived from a number of sources on the issue of evaluating qualitative research. They consider that the lack of reproducibility and generalizability are not thought to be problematic because their view is that the social world is constructed so there are no absolutes (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Reading the literature widely on classical GTM and the varying views provided me with an opportunity to construct a robust research approach to the design and analysis of the data, based on the premise of social constructivism and the interpretivist perspective. The most influential authors in this process were the Bryant and Charmaz (2007b) who they justify the repositioning of GTM away from the original GTM presented by Glaser and Strauss in 1967.

They state:

A re-positioned GTM assumes that any rendering is just that: a representation of experience, not a replication of it. It is interpretivist in acknowledging that to have a view at all means conceptualising it. Data are always conceptualised in some way....A repositioned GTM bridges defined realities and interpretations of them.

(Bryant and Charmaz, 2007b: 51)

Annells' paper (1997b) also confirmed this position and provided support for the selection of the most appropriate mode of GTM to be used for the study, presenting four issues to be explored when making the selection. These issues related to my own philosophical perspective regarding social constructivism, the intention to gain an understanding which would be useful in practice, the fit of symbolic interactionism with the inquiry and the importance of ensuring the 'voice' of the individuals being researched.

The qualitative research design of the study is therefore informed by GTM reading and is one in which, when exploring middle managers' views and experiences, multiple realities are seen as being socially constructed. The researcher's experience is also recognised as a part of both the data collection and the data analysis and the findings of the study can be assessed for reliability and validity through the provision of a detailed account of the methods employed to sample, collect and analyse the data (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007b).

The following section covers the approach taken in order to gain some insight of the three academic communities' perceptions of middle management in HE.

Survey Approach

A survey was selected in an attempt to address the context setting, subsidiary questions concerned with the views of academics of middle management and their aspirations to become managers in HE.

Surveys, utilising an online or paper based questionnaire, allow for a large number of subjects to participate in research studies and for the questions to be standardised (Sapsford, 2007). The subsidiary questions of this research support the use of the survey approach as the study population of three academic communities comprised an estimated 1400 academics and an overall anonymous view of the academic community was required rather than a small selected sample.

The approach considered most likely to maximise the response from the academics was a direct approach with a link to an online survey. However, the limitations of approaching the academics in this way cannot be underestimated and the responses to the survey must be viewed in the light of the limited number of respondents and the potentially superficial nature of the survey approach.

Reitz and Anderson (2013) explore the use of the survey method with the nursing community and there are many parallels with the use of this with the academic community. They highlight the importance of access to the internet and the level of computer literacy, promoting the advantages of online surveys in comparison to the use of postal or telephone surveys and the importance of anonymity.

The disadvantages of the survey approach include being unable to provide an explanation of the questions posed and having no control over the sampling. With the use of a postal survey, a profiled sample of potential respondents can be selected to be sent the questionnaire, but with the use of a web-based survey where a link is sent to a whole

population there is no control over who will complete the survey (Reitz and Anderson, 2013).

It is recognised that the data collected using a survey may also be superficial as there is no opportunity to probe respondents' answers or to explore contradictions in the responses (Burns and Grove, 2005).

The issue of selection bias must also be considered – that is, it is possible that only those who are interested in the subject (in this case, of leadership and management in HE) will complete the survey so the findings may not be representative of the whole population (Sapsford, 2007). This must then be considered in the analysis of the findings of the survey and any attempt to draw conclusions must reflect the inherent limitations.

The next chapter explores the way in which the research study was designed and the methods of data collection applied, in accordance with the principles of the selected mode of GTM and the survey approach.

5. Research Design

This chapter covers the way in which the study was designed in order to answer the research questions concerning the middle managers' views on the knowledge, skills and attributes required for their role. Having selected a mode of GTM as the research approach, the method of data collection which accords with this approach is in-depth interviewing (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a). Consideration was given to who would be interviewed, the access I had to middle managers in HE and the likelihood of their giving consent to be interviewed on the subject of the study.

In addition, having selected the survey approach to answer the research questions concerning the views of academics about middle management, consideration was then given to accessing the academic community. This chapter explains the way in which the study was designed and the decisions made on sampling, sample size and data collection tools.

Design of the study: semi-structured interviews

Interviews are used when there is a need to collect in-depth data from the subjects in order to answer the research questions (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, Wilson, 2006). Interviews can be of variable length depending on the range of subjects to be covered and the approach taken to the overall design and approach of the study. The instruments used for data collection during an interview include the use of an interview guide, with only topics to be covered and no specific questions, through to a list of closed questions. In between, is the semi-structured interview, with a schedule of open and closed questions and the opportunity for the interview to explore areas which are unanticipated by the researcher (Plowright, 2011).

The latter was selected as the data collection instrument, and the questions based on the purpose of the study and the findings of the literature review. The rationale for this is in the constructivist view, as demonstrated in the exploration of GTM, the interviewer will co-construct the data. Therefore, the way in which the interviews were designed would need to allow for the responses to be generated with minimal guidance. Arguably, the interview schedule would be an influencing factor but this was designed with open questions.

A copy of the interview schedule is provided in Appendix One and planning for digital recording was made with the purchase of a digital recorder and familiarisation with its functions.

Professional transcription of the interview data was needed as the volume of data precluded personal transcription of each interview. It was estimated in the planning stage that each hour of an interview would require at least 6 hours transcribing, and with the sample size of more than 25 participants, the use of a professional transcribing service was secured. Digital recordings were sent securely via the web and returned as word files and all interviewees were informed that the transcribing service maintained confidentiality with no names being used.

A careful balance with listening to the original interviews for hidden data and nuances that would not be read in the transcripts was also planned. Fendt and Sachs (2008) promote the use of notes being taken during interviews, which will include reference to body language. These were combined with the transcripts when received and amended for accuracy and completeness.

The way in which the data in the transcripts were analysed and the conclusions drawn is described in the section on data analysis later in this chapter.

Sampling approach to interviews

Starks and Trinidad (2007) explore the differences between phenomenology, discourse analysis and GTM and provide clear guidance on the distinguishing features of the steps of the research process in GTM. Drawing on their paper has confirmed that the purposive sampling method selected for this research is designed in accordance with GTM (Morse 2000 and 2001, cited by Starks and Trinidad).

Purposive sampling ensures that the people interviewed have the experience of being a manager in HE. In addition, theoretical sampling, by approaching managers in three universities in total was an attempt to mitigate the prospect of a collective and single view of middle management if only one university were to be included in the sample.

In accordance with sample size guidance within GTM approach (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a) the final sample size should be determined during the process of the analysis of the interviews. That is, the sample size would be deemed sufficient when all the categories were saturated and no new data was being generated (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a). At the start of the data collection, the proposed sample comprised 20 Department Managers and Heads of School at my university and 10 middle managers at the other two universities. The final sample, determined during the course of the study, was close to this figure with a total of 26 middle managers from three universities: 18 from my own and 8 from two other 'post 1992' universities.

The design of the study also included planning the interviews to allow for the analysis of the data between each interview, using the constant comparative technique (Charmaz, 2006). In practice it proved impossible to space the interviews as planned to allow for analysis before the next interview took place. This is because the middle managers were only available at particular times, and on occasion two interviews took place on the same day with only hours between. However, notes taken at the time of the interview allowed for reflection and consideration of the data prior to the next interview taking place.

The way in which the academics were approached and invited to be included in the study is described in Chapter Seven.

Design of the study: online questionnaire

In order to reach the maximum number of academics in each of the universities participating in the study, an on-line survey was created. I had used the software 'Survey Monkey' in my role previously so was familiar with the features for the researcher and I also had practical experience using this facility within the academic setting.

The ease of use, for both the designer and the person completing the survey, and the flexibility in the type of questions (both open and closed) available, in addition to the features allowing instant data collation and analysis were all factors which influenced the decision to use this software.

Reitz and Anderson (2013) provide a comparison of the use of postal and internet surveys (including Survey Monkey) in their review of the literature when considering these methods for accessing the nursing community. They conclude that while the internet is likely to become the preferred approach to collecting survey data in the future, consideration needs to be given to the target respondents being computer literate, the perception that an email request is intrusive and potentially irritating and the potential lack of anonymity.

They found that an internet survey tends to provide a wider reach than a postal survey but the sample is less controlled. Completion rates however tend to be better than postal surveys, with less missing data and they are less expensive to set up and administer overall (Reitz and Anderson 2013). The authors conclude:

When deciding whether to use a postal or internet survey for collecting data, researchers must consider several factors, including research topic, costs, coverage of the population being studied, timing and the demographics of potential respondents. (Reitz and Anderson, 2013:27).

Registration with 'Survey Monkey' as an individual was also critical to ensure that the data remained confidential; the use of the employer's registration with the software company would have provided instant access to the software but it would have allowed other researchers using the software under the university's registration to see the data I had generated. This would clearly have been ethically unacceptable and I would not have been able to assure the participants of the confidentiality of the data, which would inevitably have led to some declining to complete the survey.

Sampling approach to the online questionnaire

The three universities selected for the study were 'post 1992' *new* universities. For pragmatic reasons and ease of access to the subjects for the study, my employing university provided the largest number of middle managers for the interviews. The other two universities were selected through professional contacts in the sector developed during the process of external examination at one university and at the other an external examiner had participated in a validation panel at my employing university. One was of a similar size and profile to my employing university and the other was slightly larger and less vocational in its portfolio of courses.

The on-line survey was opened to the entire academic communities at each of the three universities and the participants were guaranteed complete confidentiality, with no identification of the university in which they were working. Based on information available from the universities' websites, the number of academics working at the three institutions was estimated to be a total of 1400.

A total of 161 academics (11.5%) completed the survey and the findings are presented in the context of this low response rate, which cannot be considered to be representative of the academic communities involved. The survey findings are therefore presented for contextual purposes.

Ethical issues

Throughout the period of designing the study and prior to undertaking any of the data collection in a pilot study, ethical issues were considered and addressed. These included the potential difficulty in being an insider-researcher (Hellowell, 2006) because the research involved interviewing some middle managers who had been peers or had been managed by me in a previous role.

It was anticipated that there could be concerns about confidentiality of the data and this may lead to interview data that would be incomplete and therefore of questionable reliability (whether the response in the interview would be the same if collected again at another time) and validity (whether the response in the interview reflects the respondent's true answer to the question being asked or has been moderated). Further concerns anticipated were the ability of the researcher to remain unbiased, or at least to not ascribe meanings to the data because of a shared experience of the workplace.

In accordance with good practice, the guidance given by the Open University (Burgess et al, 2006) and the guidance for educational researchers by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), ethical approval was sought for undertaking the research at the three universities involved and with the Open University. The ethical principles to be addressed in any research include *voluntary participation, informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, assurance of confidentiality or anonymity and the freedom from harm* (BERA, 2011).

These ethical principles were addressed in the following way. Potential participants for the interviews were approached via a general rather than targeted email and their *participation was entirely voluntary* as they were free to choose to respond and to raise questions about the research prior to the consent to be interviewed being given.

Explicit *informed consent* was gained in writing at the time of the interview after the participants had time to consider participation. Information about the purpose of the study was provided in writing as an email attachment and participants were invited to ask further questions when considering the possibility of being interviewed. The information sheet and consent form are provided in Appendix Two.

Furthermore, participants were assured that they could *withdraw from the study* at any time without consequence, so scheduled interviews could be cancelled, and digital recordings suspended during the interview should they decide they did not wish to participate at any stage. No participants withdrew from the study and just two asked for the digital recordings to be suspended for a short period during the interviews whilst they discussed an issue which they preferred not to be recorded. Neither issue discussed whilst the recorder was turned off was relevant to the purpose of the research but the absolute confidentiality of the issue being discussed was preserved.

Anonymity was maintained by the origin of the data being known only to myself as the researcher. The professional transcriber, who had no association with staff at any of the three universities, was not advised of the universities concerned or the names of the people who had been interviewed. All copies of the digital recordings were given a number and sent securely to the professional transcriber; they were returned as Word files to a personal email address and the original recording deleted by the transcriber. No names are referred to in the report of the data analysis and only the number ascribed to participants is given against quotes from the transcripts.

The interviewees were assured of the confidential nature of the interviews; they were advised that all discussions were to be kept confidential to the researcher and the digital recordings sent without reference to the university to a professional transcriber. They were also all advised that the full transcriptions could be returned to them for checking but every participant declined this offer at the end of the interview. This is thought to be a testament to the confidence engendered during the interview that the researcher understood the points being made and the candid nature of the discussions which took place.

In relation to *freedom from harm*, it might be considered that there was no harm likely to come through being interviewed with full consent beforehand. However, freedom from harm includes both physical and psychological harm and it is significant that three of the participants (two men and one woman) were tearful at one point during the interviews. As an experienced nurse and manager, I was able to manage the emotional nature of the interviews at these points and to assure the participants that the interview could continue if and when they became ready; all three decided to continue with the interview.

It was also important to recognise that academics in my employing HEI might have perceived a potential personal advantage in being interviewed for the research. That is, they may have considered that being interviewed by a senior and potentially influential academic would be beneficial to the way in which they were viewed within the university. However, none of the academics I interviewed were a direct report to me, many were from outside my own faculty and the names within the sample have remained confidential throughout the study. There were therefore no personal gains to be realised, with regard to the individuals' career prospects and profiles, by being interviewed. In practice it proved not to be an issue and in addition, I moved from the university prior to the completion of the research.

The ethical issues in relation to the survey were less challenging but needed to be addressed nonetheless. *Voluntary participation, informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and freedom from harm* (BERA, 2011) are plainly less applicable with an online survey than an in-depth interview. Participants completing a survey online do so, on an entirely voluntary basis and consent is implied through reading the information about the study and choosing to complete it. They can of course abandon the survey at any point after starting to complete it and they may choose to omit questions they prefer not to answer.

However, the assurance of *anonymity and confidentiality* do need to be given in order that participants will complete the survey knowing that their identity cannot be known. To this end, the participants were not invited to provide their name or to state the university they were employed by. The reason for the latter was because it was theoretically possible for an academic to be identified by their post title if they were the only academic with the title at their university (for example, Director of Student Experience). The data remained entirely confidential to me once submitted as I was the only person able to access the 'Survey Monkey' database with my personal registration details and password.

Ensuring that the above issues were addressed in the design of the study were critical to the ethical approval process. The design of the study needed to be defensible to the research ethics committees in the three universities participating in the research. The following section summarises the process of the successful ethical approval.

Ethical approval

The first step in the formal ethical approval process for the study was to gain approval from my employing university through a lengthy process of submission and interview by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (REC). More than 15 people were present on the

REC panel and the researcher was invited to the meeting to answer questions about any potential ethical issues concerned with the research.

There was extensive questioning on the research design and proposed methods of data collection. Many of the issues raised were considered not to be directly relevant to the ethics of the research but rather, were related to the design. For example, it was suggested that an improved design would be to compare middle management in post 1992 and pre-1992 universities. When the panel were convinced that the design was deliberately focussed on 'new' universities, it was suggested that the title of the research was changed to reflect this.

The panel also requested consideration of an alternative choice of new university in the sample identified because one was a previous employer of two members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at my employing university and it was considered that the data from the universities would be similar. The university in question had been selected because of my prior position there as an external examiner and hence there was an increased probability of being accepted as an 'outside' researcher. It was not considered a valid concern and this was finally conceded by the panel after much discussion and debate.

As anticipated, there was a great deal of deliberation about my position in interviewing the managers at my employing university and whether there would be ethical issues in interviewing them in relation to confidentiality. There were concerns raised that I may not be able to elicit valid and reliable data through the interview process because interviewees would be reluctant to reveal their views to a senior manager, regardless of the assurance of confidentiality.

The panel were impressed by the proposition that there was to be a three year moratorium on any publication of the research and this served to assure them that there

would be fewer issues with confidentiality than originally suggested. They did however, wish to see and approve the interview schedule and the questionnaire prior to giving approval for the research and these were subsequently submitted and approved.

After full REC approval at my employing university was granted, the two other universities were approached for access to their staff for the study. The heads of research at both responded very positively and agreed, following discussion at their respective research ethics committees and subject to the Open University providing evidence of its approval for the study, they did not have to take the proposal through their full REC's processes for approval.

Open University ethical approval for the study was granted using the fast track approval system to review the documentation for completeness and compliance with OU policies. Based on the evidence of approval at both the OU and my employing university, the other two universities granted approval for their staff to participate in the study. It was also considered prudent to approach the Vice Chancellor (VC) of my employing university for personal approval for the research and there was a very positive response.

The granting of ethical approval was a much longer process than at first anticipated and extended over a ten month period. The complexity of involving more than one organisation in a study should never be underestimated, even in a relatively small scale study.

6. The Pilot Study

In this chapter, the influence and significance of the pilot study will be explored and its impact on the main study detailed. A pilot study assists in determining whether the planned methods of data collection, access to the sample and the instruments of data collection are suitably constructed for the purpose of the research - that is, that they will help to gather the data to answer the research questions (Burns and Grove, 2005). The researcher is then able to review and adjust the design, access to the sample and the data collection tools in response to the outcome of the pilot study.

For the pilot stage, three middle managers at my employing university were interviewed. Having offered the opportunity to five, I selected on a pragmatic basis those who were available to be interviewed within the timeframe of the pilot study. The other two managers were later included in the main study.

For the pilot survey, I sent the survey link to 15 selected academics at two universities and requested completion and feedback on the questions and the design. The sample for the pilot stage survey was selected on the basis of contacts and those academics who were most likely to complete the survey and offer constructive feedback within the timeframe of the pilot study.

The results of the pilot study are provided below and the impact of the findings on the main study discussed.

Pilot study: interviews

Interviews were undertaken with three Departmental Managers (DMs) – one female and two male. All three had been appointed to their first management position in the university in the last 2 years. The interviews were undertaken in the researcher's office, where no interruptions were likely. All phones were switched off and a 'Do Not Disturb' sign was

placed on the door. An environment conducive to a relaxed interview was created by clearing a table of all papers, providing water and a hot drink and utilising a small unobtrusive digital recorder.

Testing of the use of the recorder took place prior to the commencement of each interview and prior to the interviewee coming into the room. A substitute recorder was also available in case of any difficulties encountered with recording during the interview. The information sheet and the consent form were provided for the interviewee and after a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, the researcher left the room to prepare refreshments whilst the information sheet was being read and the consent form being signed. All interviewees expressed their gratitude that there was a moratorium on the publication of the study and none had any questions about the study itself.

The interview schedule was used throughout and biographical information was collected at the start of each interview. The latter provided a very good way of 'warming up' the interviewees as simple information was being asked for in the first instance, such as the length of time they had worked in HE.

Arksey and Knight (1999) provide guidance on how to conduct interviews, starting with this approach:

To put the informant at ease, begin the interview by posing 'ice breaker' or 'easy-to-answer' questions. (Arksey and Knight, 1999:98)

Attention to the interview schedule was thought to have been exemplary until listening to the recordings where it was noted that one question was missed on one occasion (gender issues in HE). This was a salutary experience and I ensured that in the interviews of the main study, all questions were marked as covered during the course of the interview.

The interviews took considerably longer than anticipated however, with 85 minutes being the average time taken. They did not feel at all rushed and listening to them again did not reveal any area of repetition. In preparing for the recruitment to the interviews for the main study, up to 2 hours was then planned.

The interviewees were engaged throughout and very keen indeed to speak about their views and their experiences. There were no reservations expressed about speaking candidly and interviews frequently lasted longer than planned because of the willingness of the interviewees to share their experiences and views in detail.

Having undertaken the interviews in the pilot study, I found that one more open question needed to be added and one more supplementary question to allow for additional areas to be explored.

The services of a professional transcriber were employed for two of the interview recordings due to time constraints. The recordings were each listened to three times and the third interview was transcribed by me over several hours.

Analysis of the interview data

In undertaking the interviews, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do academic middle managers perceive their role?
2. What are the requisite knowledge, skills and attributes of the academic middle manager and how and when are these acquired?
3. What are the consequences of being an academic middle manager in relation to participation in teaching and research?

At the point of analysis and in accordance with GTM, the data was 'decontextualised' - separated from the original context of individual interviews and assigned codes to units of

meaning within the text of the transcription. 'Recontextualisation' occurred with the identification of patterns which emerged from the codes and from which were developed central themes, categories and concepts (Charmaz, 2006).

A constant comparison method of coding and analysing data through three stages was applied (Starks and Trinidad, 2007):

1. Open coding (examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising the data)
2. Axial coding (reassembling data into groupings based on relationships and patterns within and among the categories identified in the data)
3. Selective coding (identifying and describing the central phenomenon or core category in the data). Ideally each interview is coded before the next is conducted so that new information can be incorporated into subsequent encounters.

This last stage calls into question the ethical approval of the interview schedule which, if following the principles of GTM may later change and is of course always open to unanticipated areas being explored through probing. The pilot study led to minor amendments to the approved interview schedule later used in the main study. It is recognized that ethical approval of interview schedules assumes a static process which is not compatible with sound qualitative research principles.

The researcher is the instrument for the data collection and the analysis and as such honesty and self-reflection are required throughout these stages of the research process. The action of 'bracketing' – recognising and setting aside the researcher's own knowledge and assumptions – is required to openly address the potential for bias. As Suddaby (2006) states:

We are only human and that what we observe is a function of both who we are and what we hope to see. (Suddaby, 2006:635, cited by Fendt and Sachs, 2008)

To address the issue of potential bias, reflexive practice is suggested, such as consulting with colleagues and writing memos throughout the analysis to help explore initial thoughts and impressions of the meaning of the data. Judgement about the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 2007) and the analysis can be made in part by the explicit description of how the analysis was undertaken and the provision of the use of evidence from the interviews to support the analysis presented.

The analysis of the interview data from the pilot study was guided by the writings of Stern (2007, in Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a) and Holton (2007, in Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a). The analysis included reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, coding the data utilising a line-by-line approach followed by axial coding until finally core categories were identified. This process took many hours and the categories were identified over several days after several occasions of 'going away' from the data to consider the nature of the categories identified.

The limitation of so few interviews in the analysis is acknowledged. There was a hesitance to use the term 'core' categories and there was certainly no saturation of the data and new information arose in each interview. With limited data no attempt to apply the categories to generation of a theory was made. In addition, manual analysis was considered to be good 'training' for the main study so no software was used to support the analysis of the three interviews.

When reading and re-reading the transcripts, issues were highlighted and coded. Multiple numbers of coloured sticky notes were used to locate and identify these issues raised by the respondents, with the colours used to identify evident themes where possible. The issues were then transferred to further sticky notes onto larger A2 sized papers and gathered into categories within the themes. The themes were then colour-coded again to ensure that the analysis of the categories was undertaken systematically.

The themes identified were:

- Perceptions of role
- Knowledge requirements
- Skills requirements
- Attribute requirements
- Support for development

The analysis of the interviews resulted in many descriptive rather than conceptual categories which may in part be due to the small number of interviews and being new to GTM. However, it is significant that the core categories were all in alignment with the later findings of the main study.

The following section provides the core categories which emerged from the data analysis. Examples of quotes from which the codes were derived are given with the interview numbers in brackets.

Perceptions of their role as a middle manager

Buffering: the respondents saw their role as one in which there was a considerable amount of interpretation of messages and policies from senior managers, the practical implications of which were not always considered to have been carefully thought through which led to frustration. There was also a sense of being the defence between the staff being managed and the senior team in the university, with everything being filtered through the middle manager in both directions.

I do inform them about developments, obviously not always in detail. (1)

Overloaded: all saw that there was a very wide range of responsibilities within the role which resulted in never being able to complete the job, always being able to do more and feeling pressured for time.

Everyone seems to have greatly defined jobs except the DMs who do everything.

(3)

Conflicted: the boundaries of the role were considered to be unclear. At times there was conflict with promoting activities such as research, but not having time to undertake research themselves due to time pressures. The role of the middle manager was not viewed as particularly desirable.

You have been given this position [DM] and there is no power associated with it and there's no respect associated to it. There is something very wrong as there is full responsibility associated with it. (3)

Knowledge requirements

There were three clear categories which emerged from the analysis of the data:

Technical knowledge: All three spoke of the requirement to know and understand the 'technical' elements of the University processes including regulations, policies and procedures. These were areas that they felt they had not needed to know in detail before becoming a manager.

At my level I think we need to know at least the basics of the policies and procedures...it's very much a registry role in some ways. (3)

Contextual knowledge: All three spoke about understanding the context of Higher Education which included the current political issues and the understanding of the wider university issues.

I have learnt a huge amount about the context of Higher Education, the regulatory structures....my perspective has broadened hugely. (2)

Subject knowledge: There was a reference to their teaching and the importance of maintaining their specialist teaching for the middle manager by all three interviewees.

I can't envisage a role which only involves that [management] and doesn't leave me any room to do some teaching. (2)

Skills requirements

This was an area that was discussed at length in the interviews and provided three categories:

Meaningful Engagement: There was a considerable amount of reference to the importance of interactions with the academics being managed. The coding for this category included communication, giving people time, listening, team meetings, use of language to influence, relationships, keeping in touch, empowering people, reflecting, taking time to deal with issues and appraising situations quickly.

You have to be extremely sensitive to people's passions and their views. (1)

Visionary Resource Manager: The coding for this category included visionary, planning, delegating, course management, balancing workloads, thinking in a universal way, identifying people's strengths, multi-tasking, eye for detail.

Being able to decide where your resources go, that's a fundamental one [skill]. (3)

Teacher: All three emphasised the importance of keeping in touch with their subject and students and described the teaching that they undertook for at least 50% of their weeks.

I really enjoy the teaching you know – to be honest, that's what keeps me going.

(3)

Attributes requirements

The managers detailed the attributes they considered important for successful delivery of their work. Three categories were identified:

Empathy: The managers all felt that there was a need to be sensitive to people's fears, anxieties, needs and passions and to be able to respond to these appropriately.

I really have to sort of nurture some people and some people don't need to be nurturing (*sic*). (1)

Part of demonstrating empathy is being approachable to the staff being managed. This was originally a separate category but was subsumed into empathy as this is an attribute considered to be interdependent.

Confidence: All three used the word confidence or confident when describing themselves during the interview. There was some discussion of the transition period which focussed on the importance of being confident and assertive as a new manager – but that took time to develop after the initial appointment.

Protection: This category includes both the maintenance of professional boundaries for the manager managing their staff and also the protection of the staff and the courses from

the decisions being made in the wider university. In this category, the codes included knowing boundaries, separating behaviour from person, protecting self, staff and courses.

I don't feel like a member of the team I feel more removed now because I have to be and there has to be some distance. (1)

Support for Development

The discussions concerning the need for support for their personal and professional development led to three categories.

Formal Support: This was provided by Human Resources (HR) in the form of a Management Development Programme of 6 half-day sessions. None of the interviewees rated the MDP highly except for the session which dealt with the exploration of scenarios taken from real examples in practice. The programme was otherwise considered to be too theoretical to be useful.

It [*the MDP*] has become another thing that someone has to sit through. (2)

Line managers were identified as good supporters and HR was also seen as a resource for support and guidance on an ad-hoc basis.

Informal support: Peers were acknowledged as a good source of support for day to day management issues. Sharing a room with peers allowed for sharing of good practice but the disadvantage was that this took them away from the people they were managing and created a physical barrier to informal interactions with their teams.

Reflection on experience: This category includes a number of areas that provided a focus for the reflection. Role models were seen as a focus for reflection about their own practice as a manager.

All three referred to *taking more time* to consider issues now that they felt more experienced and that this has arisen from reflecting on experiential learning where they had made decisions too hastily resulting in problems later.

I believe, really, it's experiential learning that's the main way that one progresses as a manager. (2)

When asked about what more they might have been offered as new managers, all three identified that a mentor would have been helpful in the early stages of their appointments as managers.

A friendly voice on the phone for the first 6 months of the job that you could call anytime saying 'I don't know how to handle this particular one'. (2)

Gender Issues

Gender issues were raised in two of the interviews (it was missed as a question in one interview) and this was not thought to be an issue in the university but visible black or minority ethnic group was raised as an issue within the senior management team of the university and the wider management team.

This aligns with McTavish and Miller's (2008) findings of under-representation of women in HE management in their case study research and also Deem's (2009) position that there is an under-representation of women *and* people from ethnic minorities in posts above the Head of Department level in HE. The question was therefore amended to include the terms 'equality and diversity' in place of gender.

Discussion

The results of the pilot were a useful starting point for the main study which included a further 23 interviews with middle managers.

The interview schedule was amended in accordance with the findings of the pilot study and is provided in Appendix One. The questions in the interview schedule were linked directly to the research questions which had emerged from the literature review, as detailed in Chapter Three.

The next section describes the findings of the online pilot survey completed by a small sample of academics.

Pilot Study: online survey

Construction of the self-completion questionnaire was undertaken utilising the on-line survey tool 'Survey Monkey'. An initial 10 question self-completion questionnaire was created utilising all the knowledge and experience gained from teaching students of Research Methods modules for more than 12 years (Burns and Grove, 2005, Sapsford, 2007).

The questions were mostly closed questionsNo table of figures entries found. with answers to be selected from a menu of options and an opportunity was given to add comments where appropriate. The questions were focussed on answering the research questions which had been derived from the review of the literature, as detailed in Chapter Three:

- What are the perceptions within HE of the academic middle manager's role?
- What are the motivations and aspirations of academics to become managers?

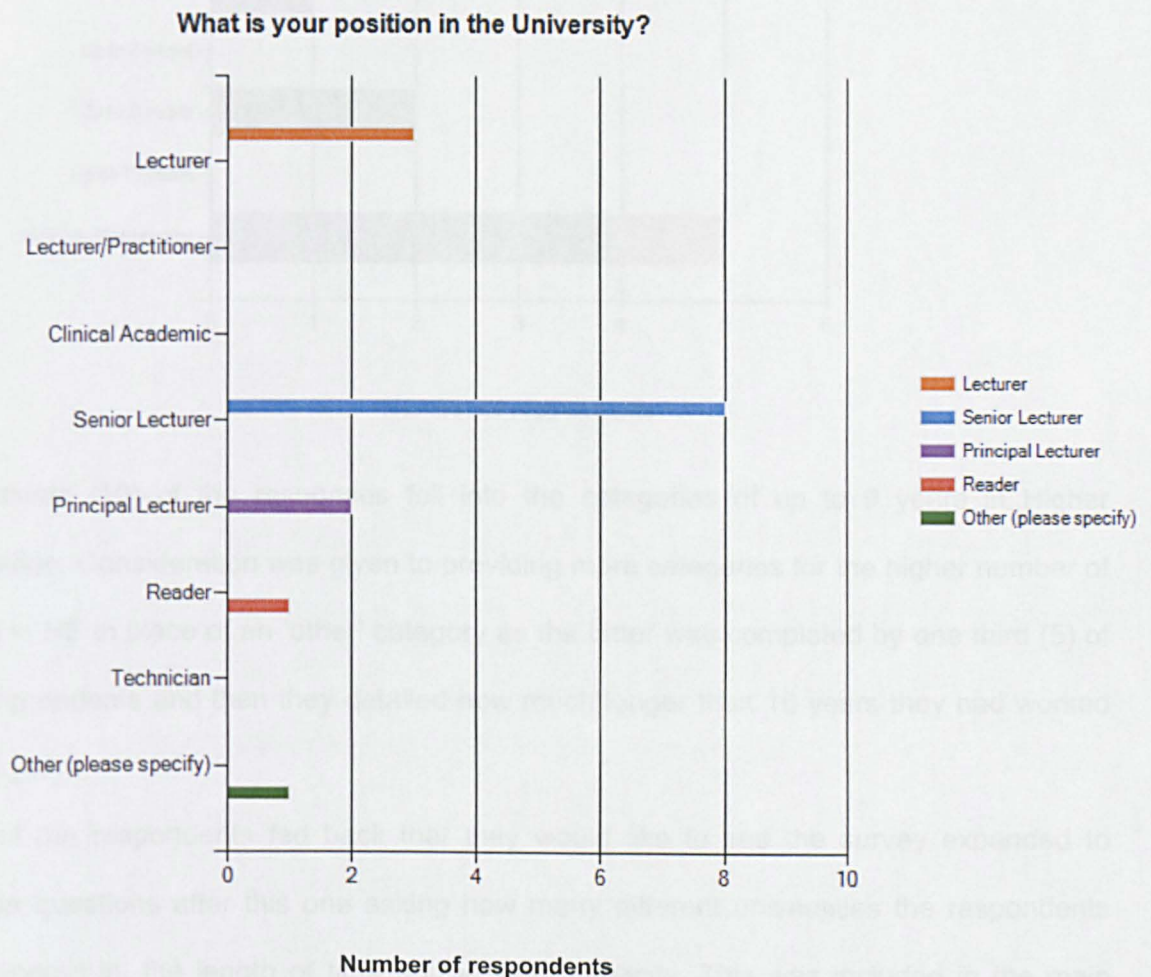
A copy of the full questionnaire can be found in Appendix Three. It was piloted with a small group of 15 academics in my university and one external university. This enabled a

'testing' of the questions for clarity and amendment of the questionnaire based on the feedback received from the participants.

Analysis of the survey data

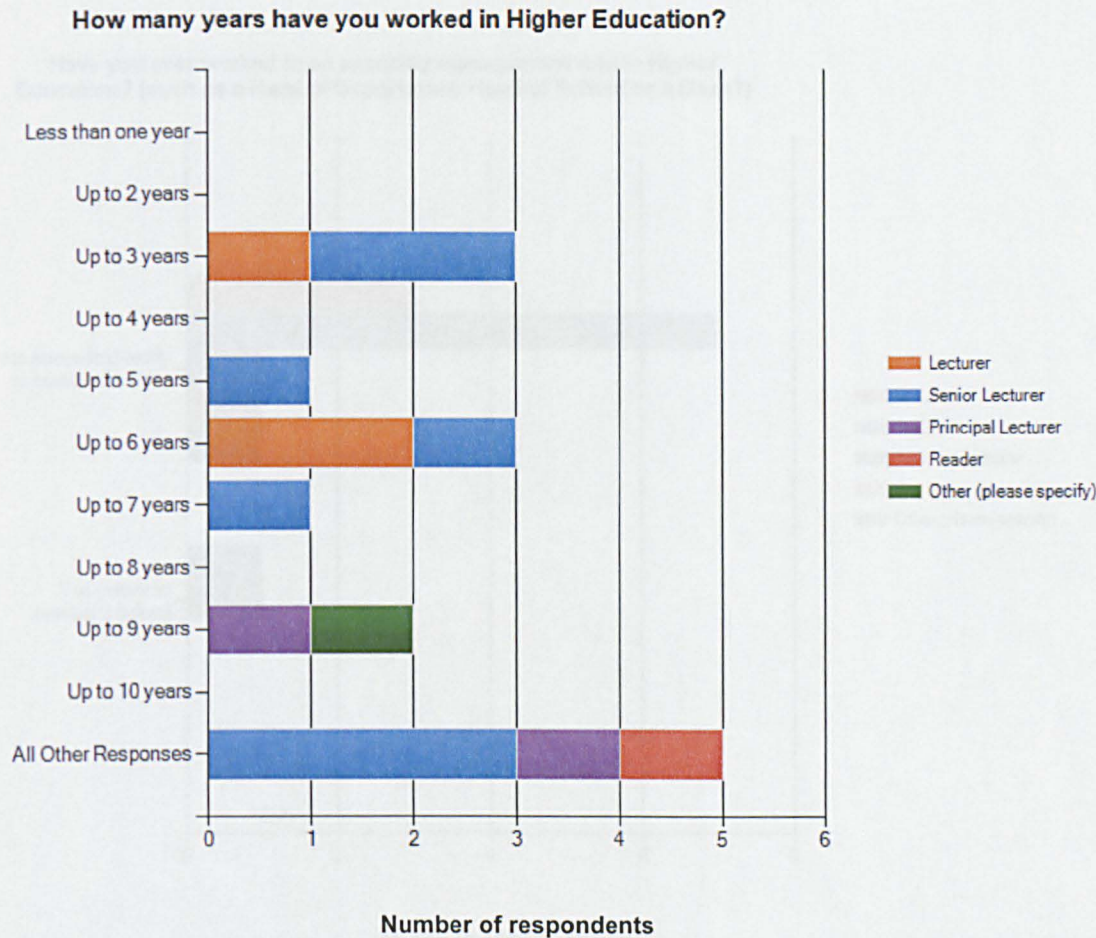
The results are provided in chart form, with an indication below of how the results have influenced the changes to the online survey in the main study.

Figure 6.1: Position in the University



The majority of the respondents were senior lecturers with one stating that they were a research fellow. The revised categories of 'Research Fellow' and 'Professor' were therefore included in the main study.

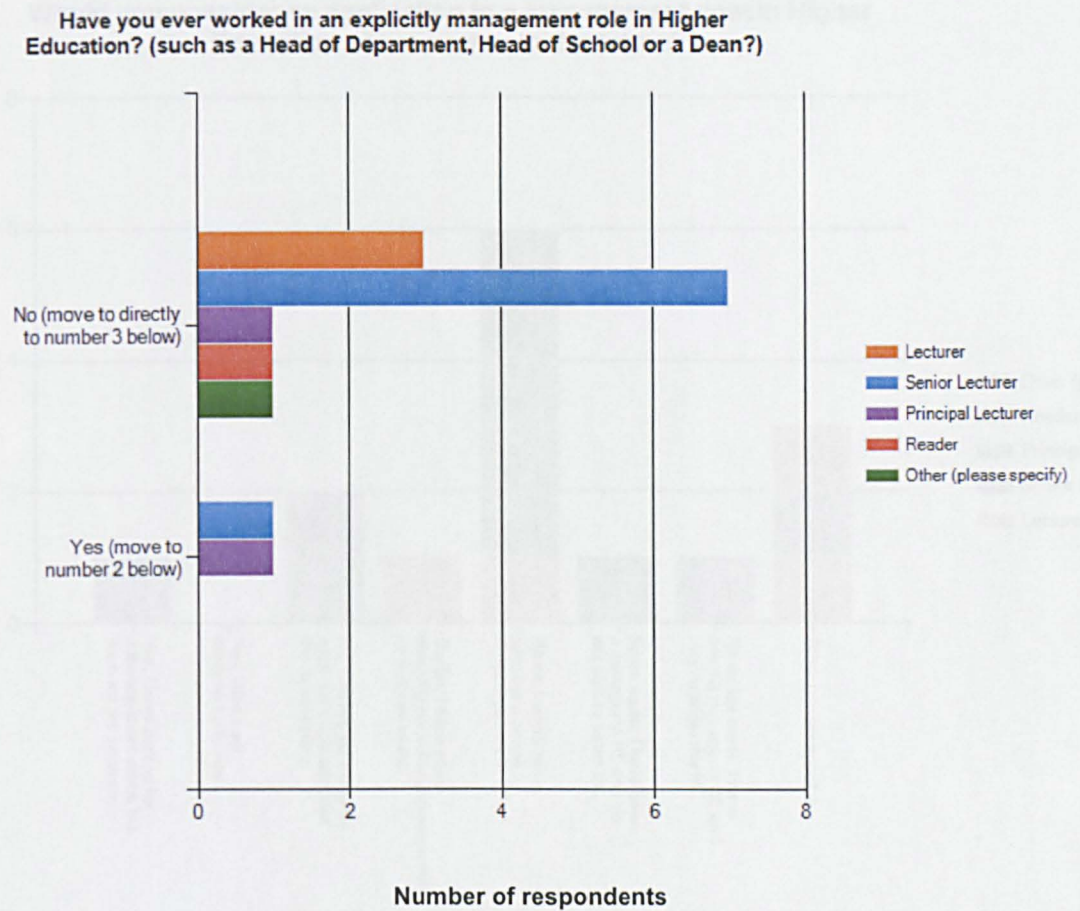
Figure 6.2: Years worked in Higher Education



Two thirds (10) of the responses fell into the categories of up to 9 years in Higher Education. Consideration was given to providing more categories for the higher number of years in HE in place of an 'other' category as the latter was completed by one third (5) of the respondents and then they detailed how much longer than 10 years they had worked in HE years.

One of the respondents fed back that they would like to see the survey expanded to include questions after this one asking how many different universities the respondents had worked in, the length of time and in what capacity. This was included in the main study as it provided a much more detailed picture of the respondents.

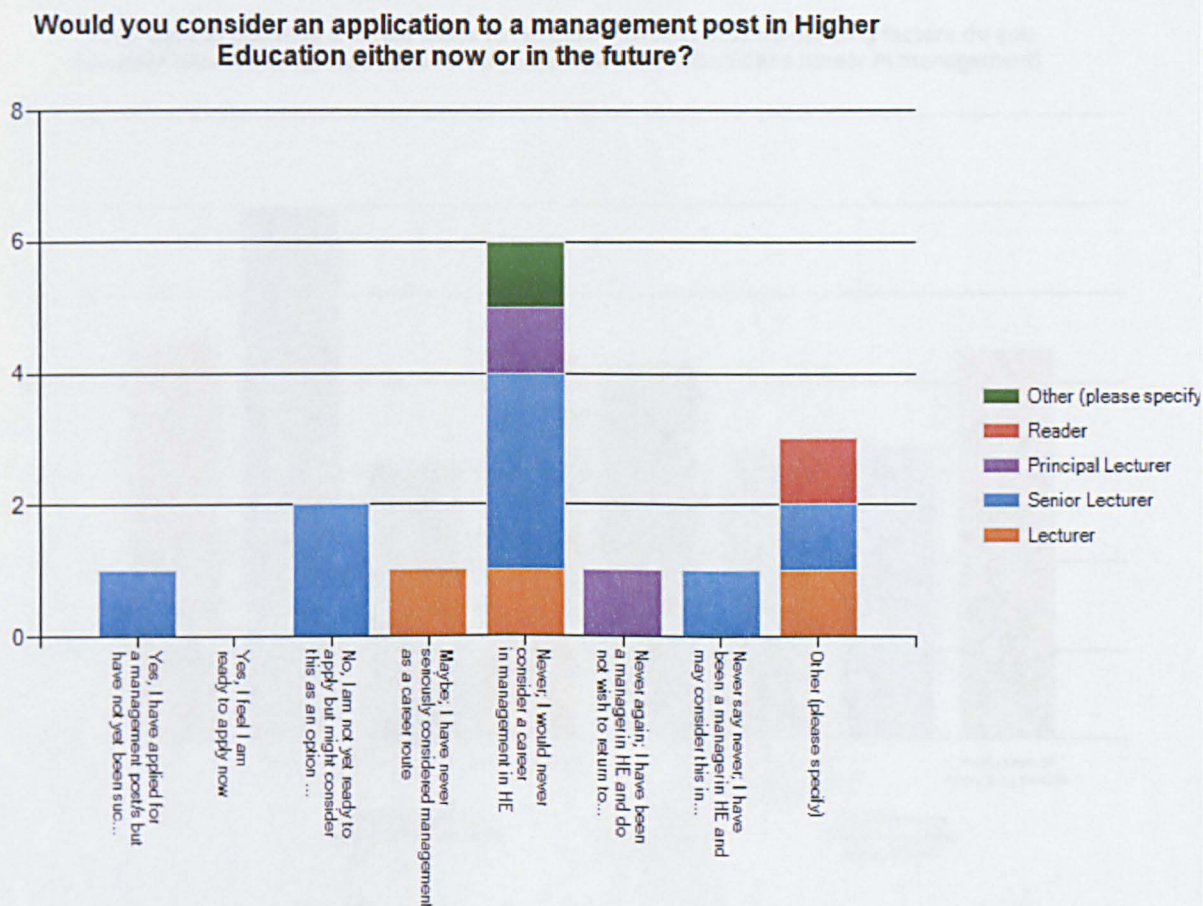
Figure 6.3: Management experience



It can be seen that 2 respondents replied that they had worked in management roles in HE previously and when replying to the next question provided details on all management posts and the length of time in each of them. These posts included 'Head of Subject' and 'Head of Department' and the length of time in each post was given.

The software provides text analysis so that should there be large numbers of people responding with similar titles in the larger study, there is a facility to count these automatically within the programme.

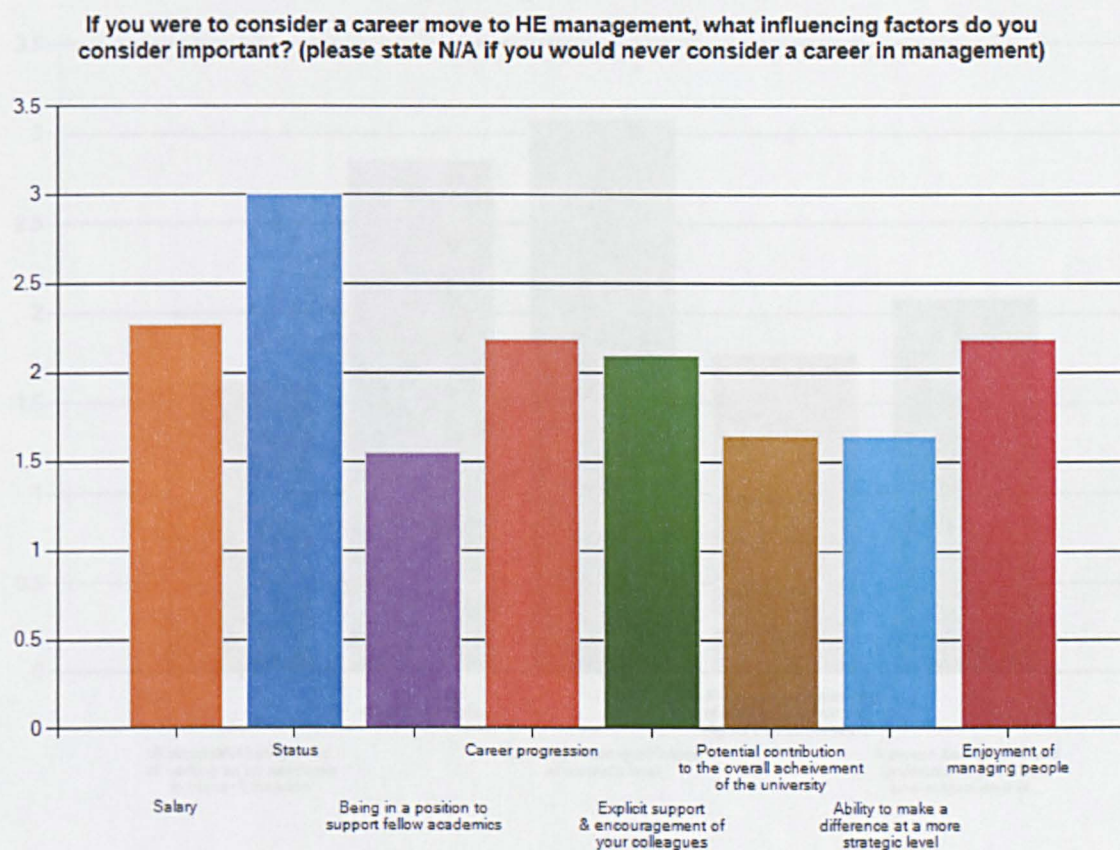
Figure 6.4: Intention to become a manager



It is interesting to note that more than 53% (8) of the respondents would never consider a career in management in HE. This includes the 6 who responded 'Never' and 2 of those in the 'Other' category, one of whom had previously been a manager in a Further Education College.

The ability to be able to single out the data from each respondent assists in exploring the level consistency in the individual's responses, whilst permitting the respondent to remain anonymous.

Figure 6.5: Influential factors

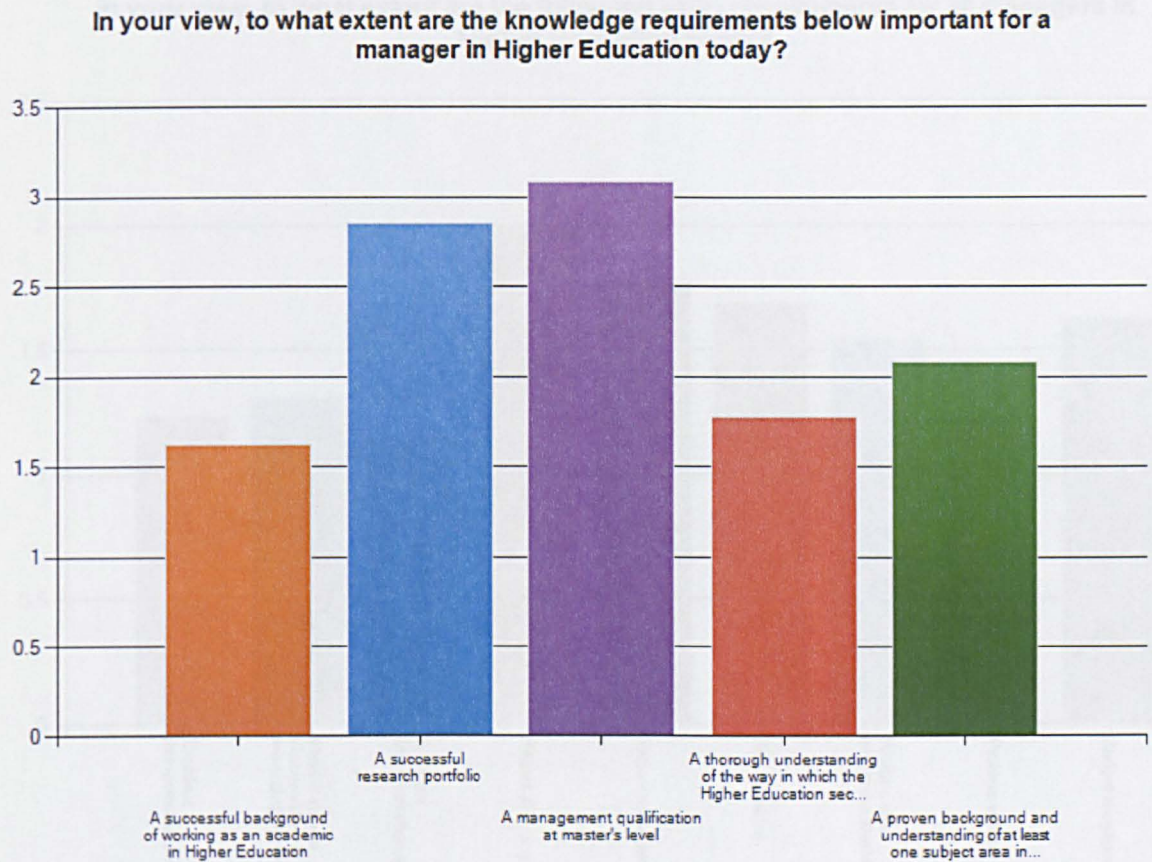


The question required respondents to rate the importance of a variety of influential factors which might be considered if they were to consider a move into management, with the option of N/A if they would never consider a move to management.

Of the 8 who replied to the previous question that they would never consider a career in management at least 4 answered this question.

In this question, the lower the score, the more important that factor would be in making a decision to move into management in HE. 'Being in a position to support fellow academics' rates the most important alongside 'Potential contribution to the overall achievement of the university' and 'Ability to make a difference at a more strategic level'.

Figure 6.6: Managers' Knowledge

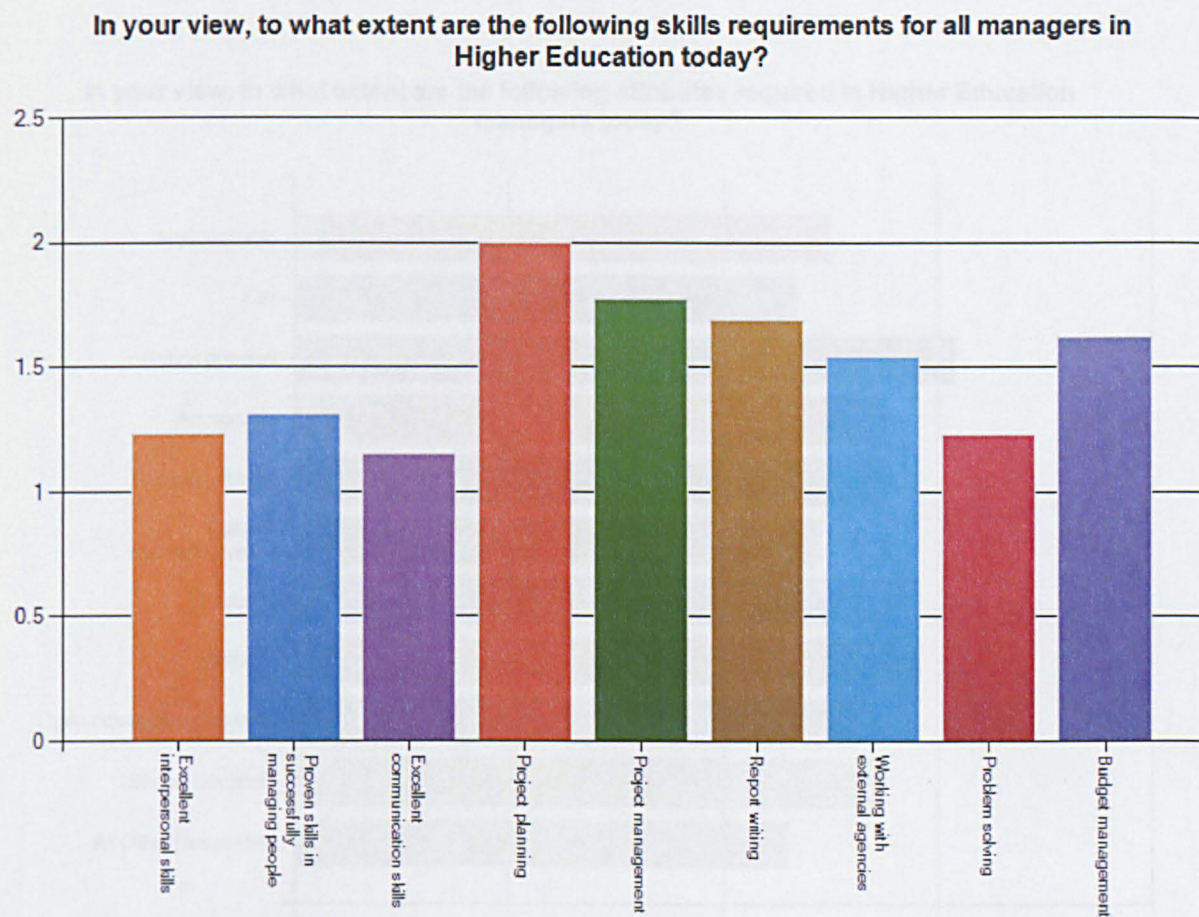


The most important knowledge requirements of the manager in HE were considered to be 'A successful background as an academic in HE' and 'A thorough understanding of the way in which the HE sector works'.

This aligned with the data from the managers' interviews where the analysis led to categories of 'technical knowledge' and 'contextual knowledge'.

'A successful research portfolio' and a 'A management qualification at masters level' were considered to be the least important overall.

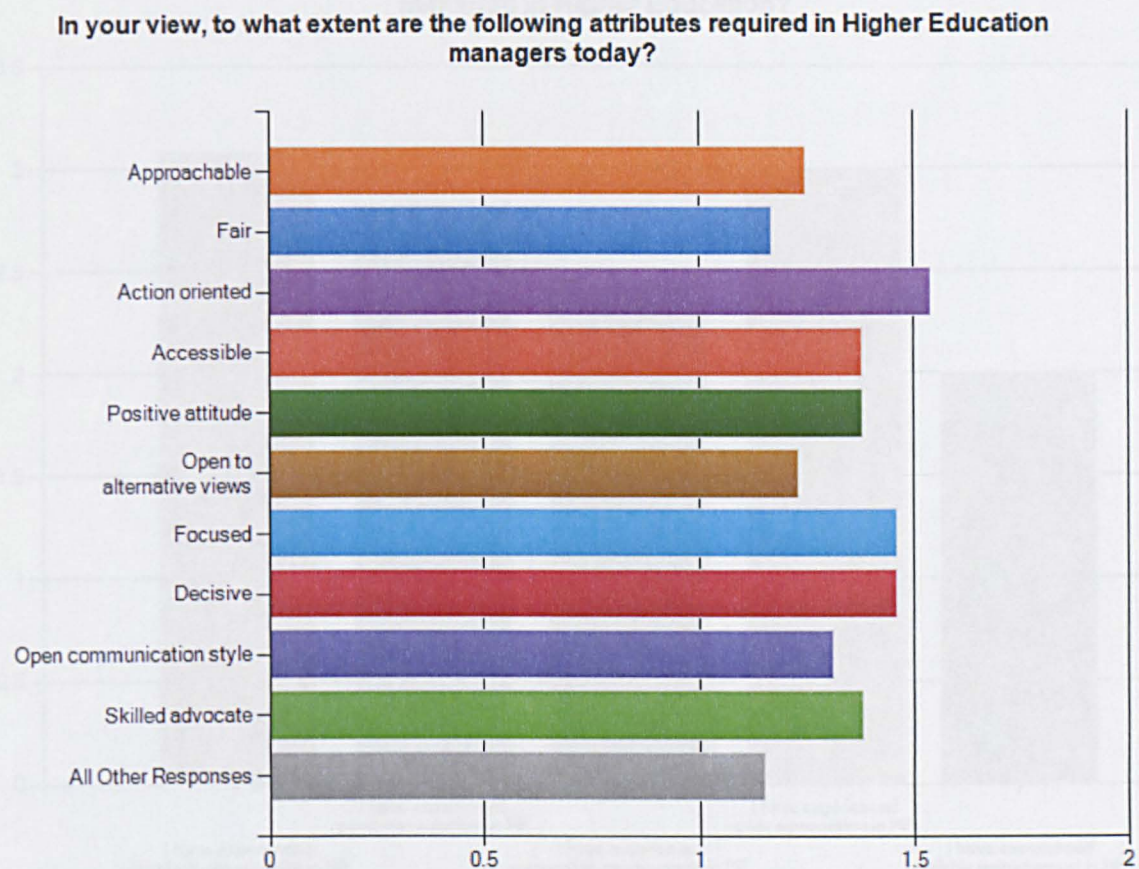
Figure 6.7: Managers' Skills



The findings regarding skills requirements of managers show that the factors considered most important are communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving and proven skills in managing people. The three least important are project planning, project management and budget management.

These findings triangulate well with the data from the managers' interviews where the skills they viewed as essential to their roles related to the management of people. Resource management was also one of the categories identified through the analysis of the interview data.

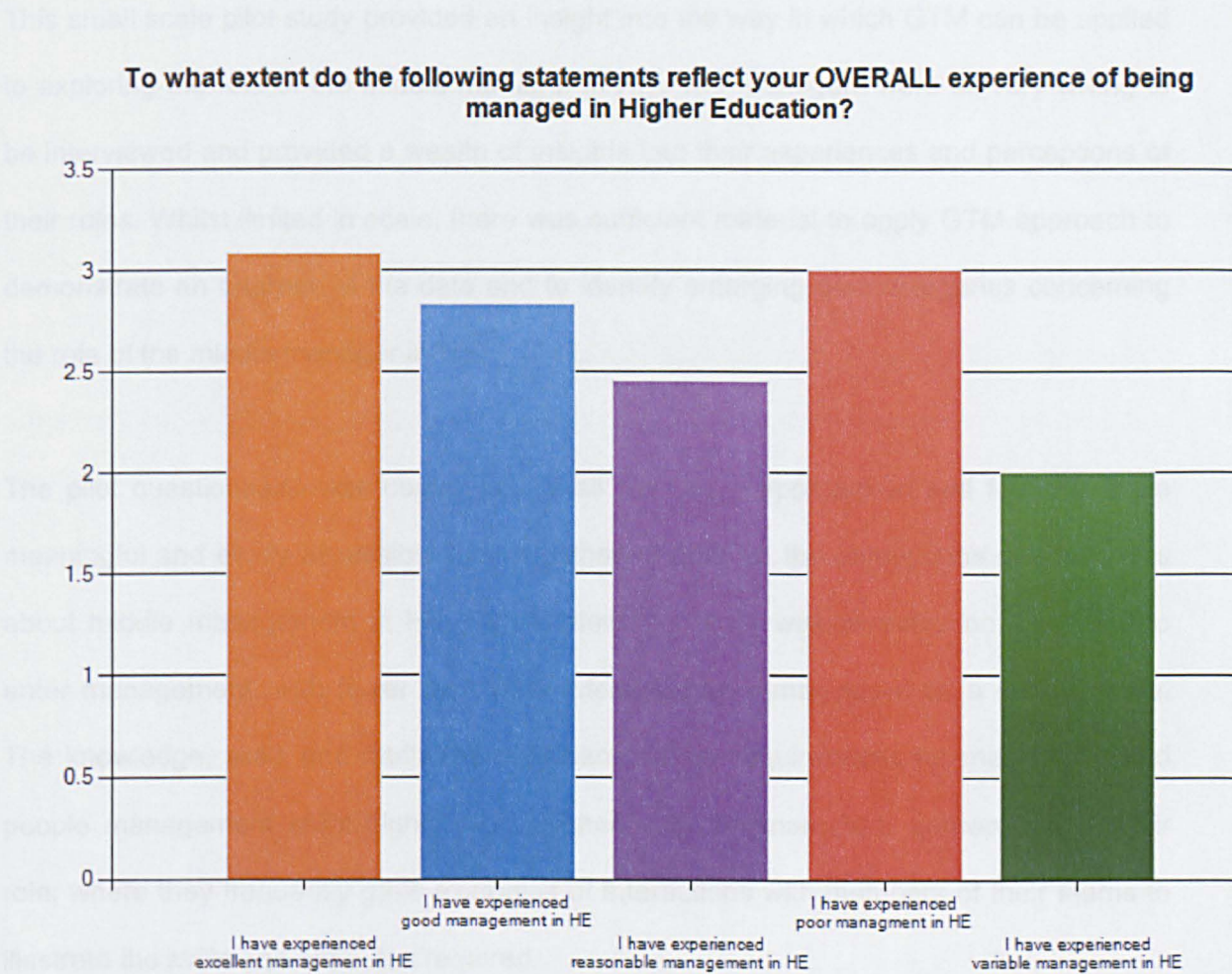
Figure 6.8: Managers' Attributes



There was very little to distinguish between the scores of the 10 attributes with every one being scored as essential or very important. With such small numbers of respondents, it would be inadvisable to try to distinguish between the above scores where the lowest rating could be 1 (if all respondents had rated the variable as 'essential') and the highest 4 (if all respondents had rated the variable as 'not important').

The last bar chart named 'All Other Responses' refers to 'A willingness to tackle difficult issues' as only 10 variables can be named in the downloaded charts from this website.

Figure 6.9: Overall experience of being managed



The response to this question was quite variable with no pattern emerging. The feedback from two of the respondents was that this was difficult to complete in a meaningful way and did not help to show the inconsistency of their experiences of management in HE both within and between universities.

In the main study, this question was therefore amended to include the options to reflect varied experiences of being managed, either in different settings or with differing line managers. It is recognised that this question, even in the main study, was probably the most difficult to cover in a questionnaire of this nature, where there is no opportunity to clarify and give the detail of a varied experience.

Conclusions of the pilot study

This small scale pilot study provided an insight into the way in which GTM can be applied to exploring the role of the middle manager in HE. The managers were all very willing to be interviewed and provided a wealth of insights into their experiences and perceptions of their roles. Whilst limited in scale, there was sufficient material to apply GTM approach to demonstrate an analysis of the data and to identify emerging core categories concerning the role of the middle manager in HE.

The pilot questionnaire was completed by all who were approached and found to be a meaningful and easily accessible tool in gathering data on the perceptions of academics about middle management in HE. Some interesting data was revealed on intentions to enter management, with fewer than 50% interested in management as a career move. The knowledge, skills and attributes considered to be requirements for managers rated people management skills highly. This aligned with the managers' perceptions of their role, where they frequently gave examples of interactions with members of their teams to illustrate the skills and attributes required.

The utilisation of the tool and the feedback from the pilot groups provided guidance on the construction of the larger questionnaire developed for the main study. It assisted in ensuring that the data collection in the main study was both rigorous and thorough in answering the research questions and the changes made ensured misinterpretations of questions were reduced to a minimum. The conduct of the main study is covered in the next chapter.

7. The Main Study

This chapter explores the way in which the three universities were approached, the participants recruited for both the interviews and the completion of the on-line questionnaire.

Within my employing university, the recruitment process was largely under my control. However, gaining access to and recruiting the wider group of managers and academics in the two external universities became dependent largely on the respective 'gatekeepers' of the universities and the information about the research that they were willing to pass on to the middle managers and academics. The maintenance of good relationships with the gatekeepers throughout the period of the study was recognised as essential to the success of the recruitment process.

Recruitment to the study: interviews

External university one (EU1): The Head of the Research Ethics Committee agreed to send out the letter of invitation to all middle managers in the university in which I asked for the managers (Heads of School and Heads of Department) to contact me by email if they wished to participate. The invitation to participate in the research was sent to all academics via an 'all staff' email, written by myself and sent by the Head of the REC.

Attached to the email sent to the Head of the REC was an information sheet on the research study. I also included the consent form and the interview guide for the records of the Head of the REC only and for complete transparency in the process. These documents were sent for the Head's records only as he had facilitated the ethical approval at the university.

The Head unfortunately, however, sent all the documents with the 'all staff' email and this resulted in one participant spending a considerable amount of time preparing his answers

for the interview. This resulted in a longer interview than anticipated. It was a salient reminder that relying on recruitment to a study by anyone other than the research lead is out of the control of the researcher and very clear guidance has to be given. The guidance for the second external university was amended in an attempt to avoid this occurring again.

The benefit of having worked as an external examiner at EU1 was that two managers were willing to be interviewed for the study immediately they read the email and they offered to spread the word amongst their peers at the university. This 'snowballing' approach to recruitment (Burns and Grove 2005) proved to be effective and five managers were recruited this way.

External university two (EU2): The Head of Research took the same approach with an 'all staff' email to managers and attached the letter of invitation only. The initial email resulted in no responses at all and a reminder email was requested to be sent after 2 weeks.

The university was at the time partnered with my employing university to provide approval of the research degrees. There was an excellent existing relationship with the research centre and a willingness to support research and data collection. The recruitment process resulted in three managers being interviewed in total. However, the recruitment was slow to be realised and whilst the first interviewee responded directly to the email invitation, the snowball effect was again used to recruit two further managers.

Employing University (EU3): Recruitment to the study was undertaken in a similar way except that I was able to directly approach managers to participate in the study by personal email. Many were aware that I was undertaking the professional doctorate and had shown a willingness to participate. Two expressed disappointment that I had been

unable to interview them as part of the pilot study and were included in the final number of 18 interviews at my employing university.

The response from all three universities resulted in a total of 26 interviews conducted over six months. 25 interviews took place at the academic managers' place of work and one in a café local to the manager's university. No more than two interviews were conducted on any one day and for the most part only one was conducted in any one day. This allowed time to consider and reflect on the interview data and the experience before moving to the next.

The administration in arranging interviews with such a large number of individuals, even where the majority were in my employing university, should not be underestimated and many interviews were planned and then cancelled due to participant diary changes and later reorganised. Two were never rescheduled, but the data analysis demonstrated that there was no new data being generated by the time the 23rd manager was interviewed, so these were not pursued.

Recruitment to the study: online questionnaire

Each of the universities placed the invitation to complete the questionnaire on the email briefing that is circulated each week to the whole university community. The hyperlink to the questionnaire itself on Survey Monkey was provided in the email so that participants could click through directly.

It was anticipated that there would be a need for a second request for participants using the same method of recruitment to participate as questionnaires are known to have a low completion rate (Sapsford, 2007). 120 people completed the survey after the original request. Two months later a reminder was sent to the 'gatekeeper' of all daily 'all staff'

emails at the three universities which resulted in a further 41 academics completing the survey.

The survey data could be monitored at any time by logging into the Survey Monkey website and it was helpful to be able to review the emerging results and themes in the narrative data as the questionnaires were completed.

Conduct of the interviews

The consent form was signed prior to the interview starting; this proved to be a valuable way to introduce how the interview was to be conducted and the issues of confidentiality of the data, anonymity of the participant, the use of a professional transcriber and the deletion of the recordings once transcribed.

Questions about how the interview data was to be stored were asked by one participant who was completing her own data collection for her doctoral studies. She was satisfied with the answers given and then signed the consent form.

The interview schedule had been revised to take into account the findings from the pilot study. In the pilot study two issues were identified by all respondents which impacted on how they perceived their role as a manager, but these had not been part of the interview schedule. These were 'teaching as priority' and 'vulnerability of management':

- Teaching as priority: Managers interviewed referred to teaching as their priority and the reason that they entered into academia. They referred to not wanting the 50:50 balance of teaching and management to tip any further towards management and to lose more teaching hours to the management role.

An additional question in the interview schedule was added on this aspect of balance of responsibilities. The respondents were asked, as in the pilot study, how much teaching, on average, they were scheduled each week. A supplementary question was added to ask their view of the balance between their teaching and management roles and this proved to be helpful in illustrating their perceptions and aspirations of their role.

- **Vulnerability of Management:** The managers in the pilot study referred to viewing a manager's job as more likely to be vulnerable to voluntary severance and compulsory redundancy than a purely teaching post. This can be seen in the context of the economic recession in the UK at the time, where many universities had made deliberate savings through cuts to academic and administrative posts.

Again an additional question related to this issue was included in the interview schedule for the main study. Care was taken that this was not presented as a leading question, inspiring them to consider an issue that they would never have volunteered. However, in using the GTM, it is permissible and positively encouraged to explore areas that have arisen in previous interviews (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).

In utilising GTM, the interviews should continue to be conducted until no new data are generated, with data being 'constantly compared' with what has been generated previously in the study and all categories 'saturated' with the data from the interviews. The findings should then be compared with the existing literature on the subject to see how they complement and add to the existing body of knowledge.

The interviews were listened to as soon as possible after the interview had taken place, often on the return train journey home from the external universities. Notes were made of significant issues and any themes emerging from the data. The early themes included a strong and repeated emphasis on interpersonal skills and the most important attribute which pervaded all interviews in the early stages was the ability to work with people.

The findings of the online questionnaire are presented in the following chapter in order to provide some contextualising background material prior to the presentation of the interviews data.

8. Findings from the On-line Questionnaire

This chapter summarises the data collected on the on-line questionnaire from 161 respondents. It must be noted that the sample size is small and the findings therefore need to be viewed with considerable caution. The academics who completed the survey cannot be seen as representing the views of the academic communities in the three universities as the data reflects a potentially biased insight from a limited number of academics.

It should also be remembered that within the small sample, academics who completed the survey may have had negative experiences of management that they were keen to share in an anonymous way (Burns and Grove, 2005). Others who have had a more positive experience may be less likely to spend time completing a survey and commenting on their experiences unless these were exceptional.

The findings therefore are presented as providing some limited contextual information within which the findings from the interviews with middle managers might be placed.

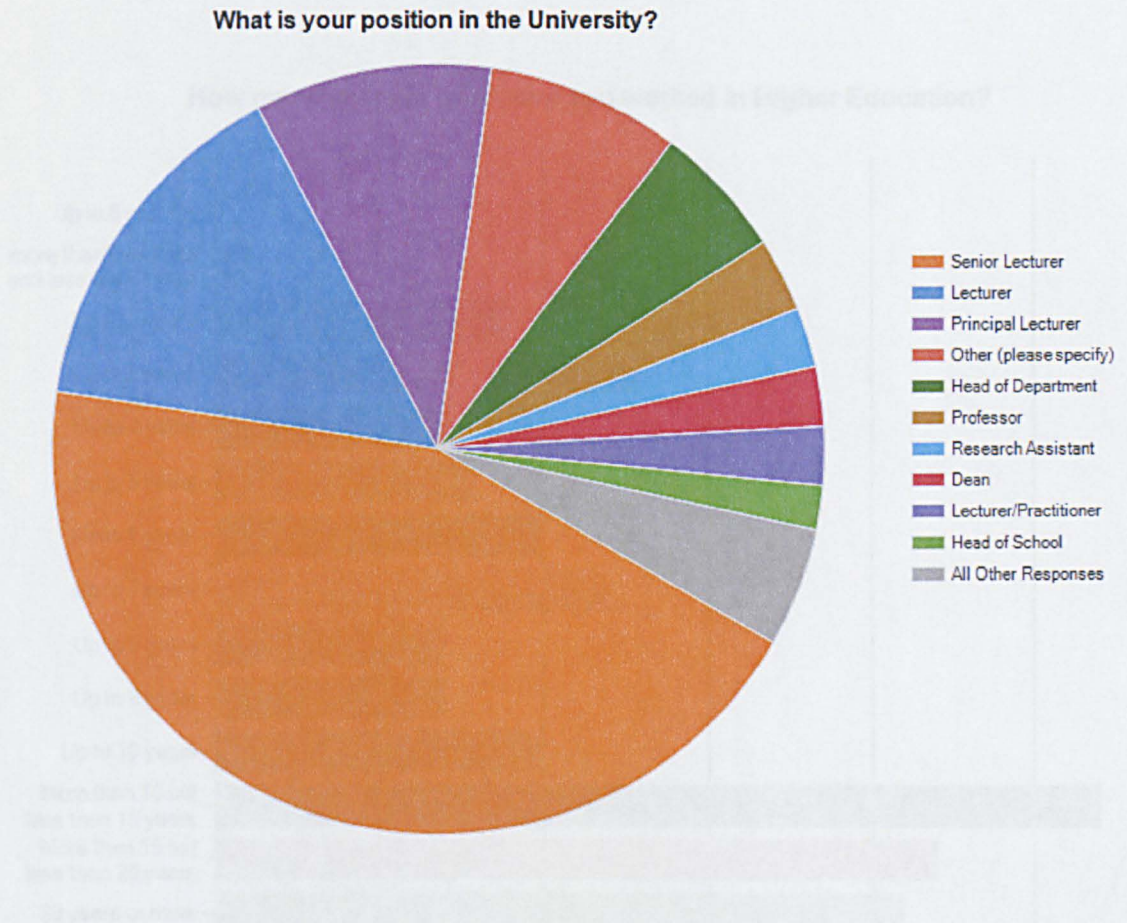
The Survey Monkey software offers a variety of flexible ways in which the data can be displayed. This includes the basic description of the data, such as the number of respondents in the various age bands and cross tabulation of variables to provide the opportunity for interpretation of a relationship - such as length of service as an academic and aspiration to become a manager. The instant collation of the data provides the opportunity for the relationships between multiple variables to be tested.

The survey was completed on line by 161 academics. The on-line survey was open to the academic community of the three universities in the sample and all academics invited to complete the survey. In order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents, the employing university was not identifiable in the responses.

Profile of the sample

161 academics completed the survey of which 41 were academics who self-declared as working in a management position.

Figure 8.1: Position in the University.



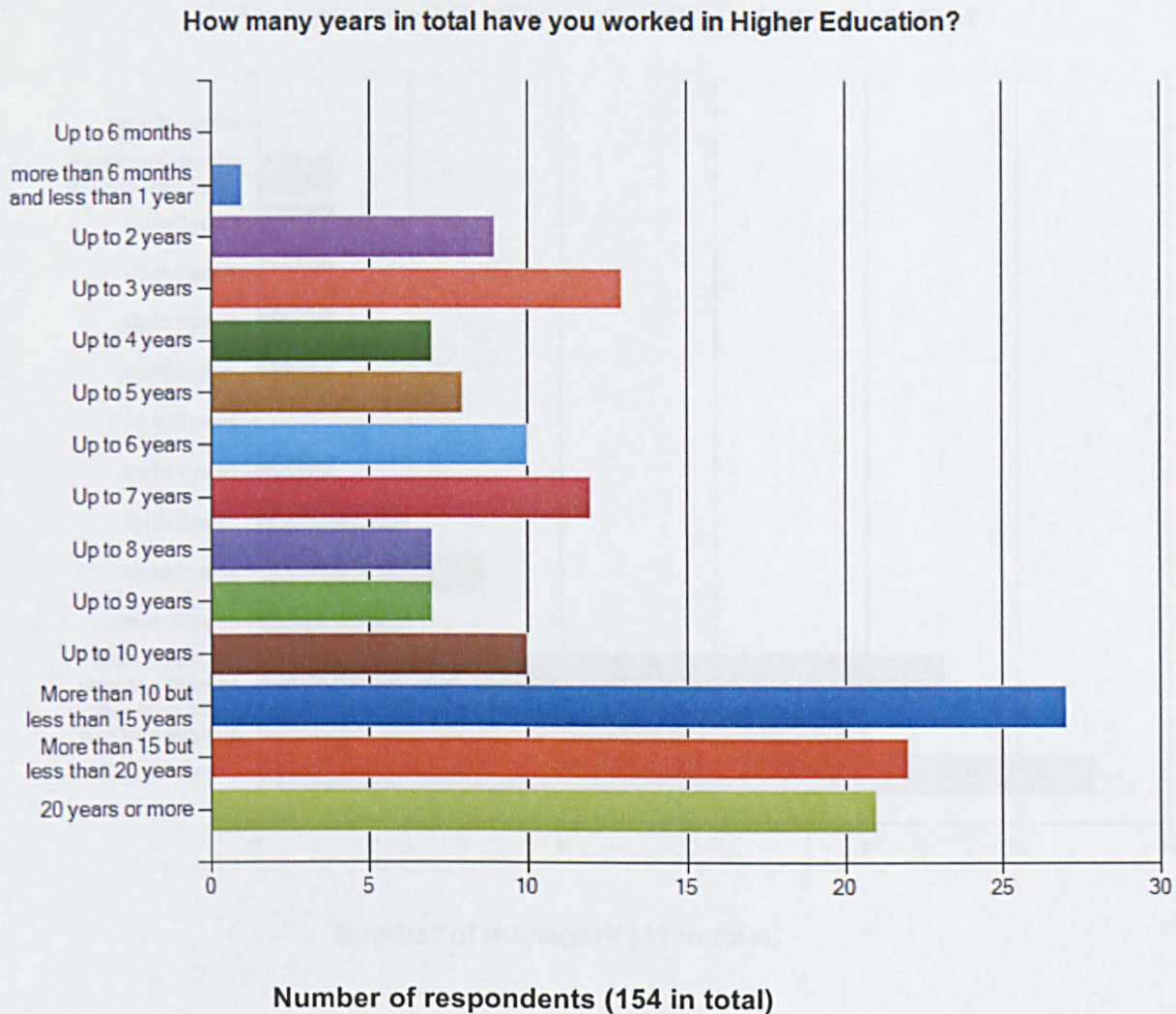
In response to the question asking for the respondent's position in the University, the predetermined categories were completed by 147 and 14 completed 'other' and specified their position, which were then correlated with a later question asking whether the post was a management position. 9 were determined to be academic managers and 4 to be academics with no management responsibilities.

Years worked in Higher Education

Respondents were asked to identify the length of time they had spent working in Higher Education.

The following chart shows the number of respondents in each of the categories of years, with 70 of 154 (45.5%) having worked in HE for more than 10 years. 7 respondents did not answer the question appropriately.

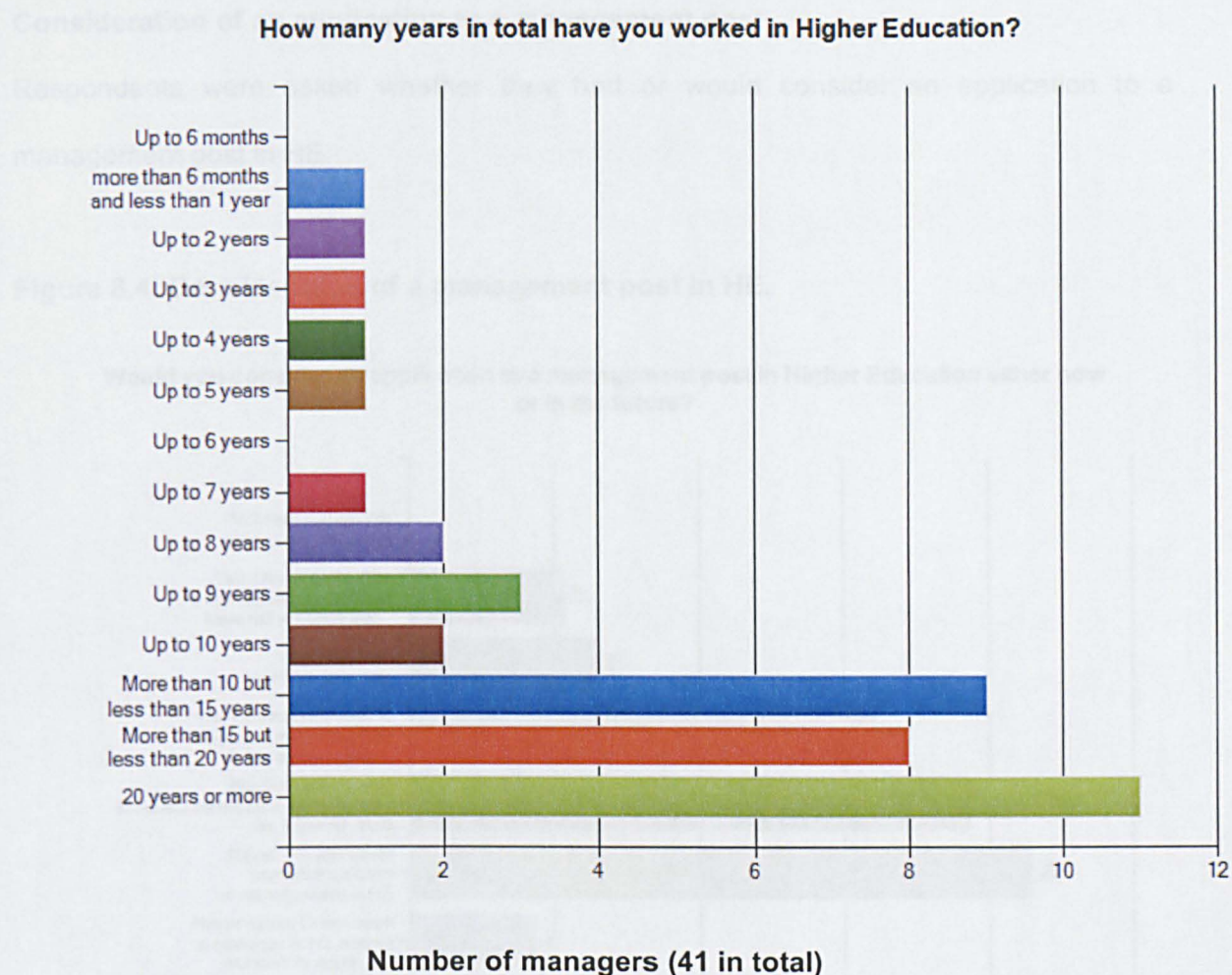
Figure 8.2: Years worked in Higher Education.



When the figures are filtered to reveal just the managers in the sample, 28 of the 41 managers (68%) had worked in HE for more than 10 years (see figure 3 below). This reflects approximately the findings of the profile data for the middle managers in HE who were interviewed (20 of the 26 interviewed = 78%).

It also indicates that the longer an academic works in HE, the more likely they are to become a manager, where 40% of those working in HE for more than 10 years were managers, while just 16% of those working on HE for less than 10 years were managers.

Figure 8.3: Managers only: years worked in Higher Education.



Number of HEIs

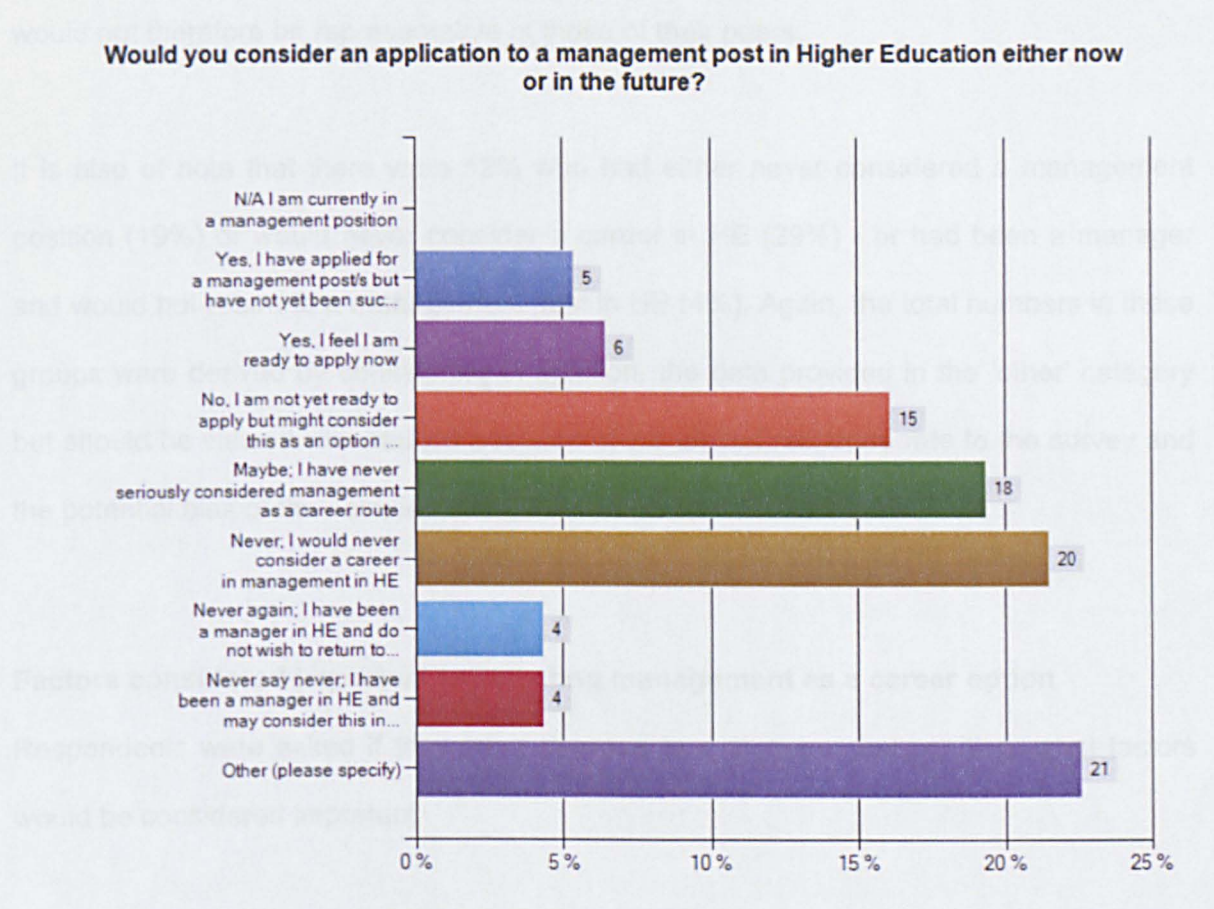
Respondents were asked how many other HEIs they had worked within. This was in order to determine whether the number of institutions is related to the progression to a management role. The results showed that of the academic managers, 63% had worked in at least one other HE institution prior to the completion of the survey, in comparison to 51% of the academics.

A calculation of a Chi Square test to determine whether this was statistically significant showed that it was not – with a p value of 0.18, showing that there was an 18% chance of the differences occurring by chance alone (Preacher, 2001).

Consideration of an application to a management post

Respondents were asked whether they had or would consider an application to a management post in HE.

Figure 8.4: Consideration of a management post in HE.



Percentage of academics who completed this question (93)

The results showed that there were 5 academics who had applied for a management position but were as yet unsuccessful.

In addition, there were a further 6 academics who felt that they were ready to apply for a management position at the time of completing the survey and another 20 who felt that they might consider this as an option in the future. The 20 are made up of 15 who answered the question directly and another 5 who answered under 'other' who gave a more detailed explanation of their position.

This shows that 12% of the sample of academics were ready or had already applied for a management post and a further 21% who might consider a management position. The total of 33% was a surprisingly high figure but should be viewed with caution. This was a small sample of academics who may have been particularly motivated to complete the questionnaire because they were interested in a career in management and their views would not therefore be representative of those of their peers.

It is also of note that there were 52% who had either never considered a management position (19%) or would never consider a career in HE (29%) - or had been a manager and would not return to a management post in HE (4%). Again, the total numbers in these groups were derived by considering in addition, the data provided in the 'other' category but should be viewed with caution because of the limited response rate to the survey and the potential bias of the sample.

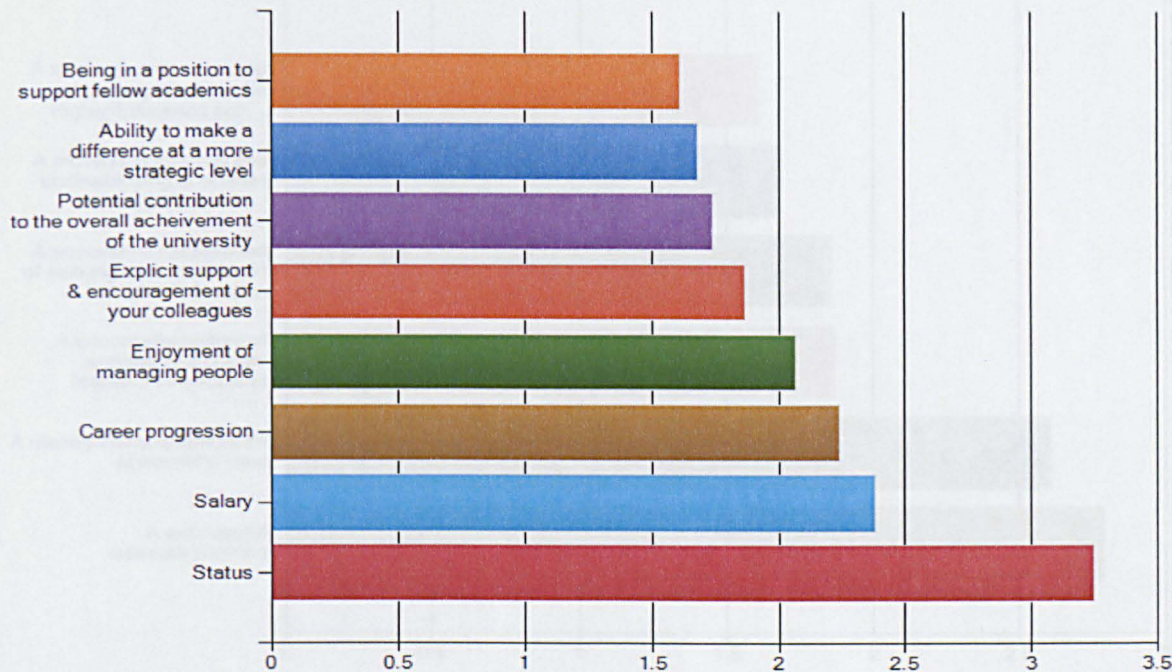
Factors considered important in selecting management as a career option

Respondents were asked if they were to move to a management position, what factors would be considered important.

The chart overleaf shows which factors are considered the least and most important on a descending scale. The criteria of salary and status are considered to be the least important motivating factors in considering a move to management in HE.

Figure 8.5: Influencing factors in considering a management post in HE.

If you were to consider a career move to HE management, what influencing factors do you consider important?(please state N/A if you would never consider a career in management in HE)



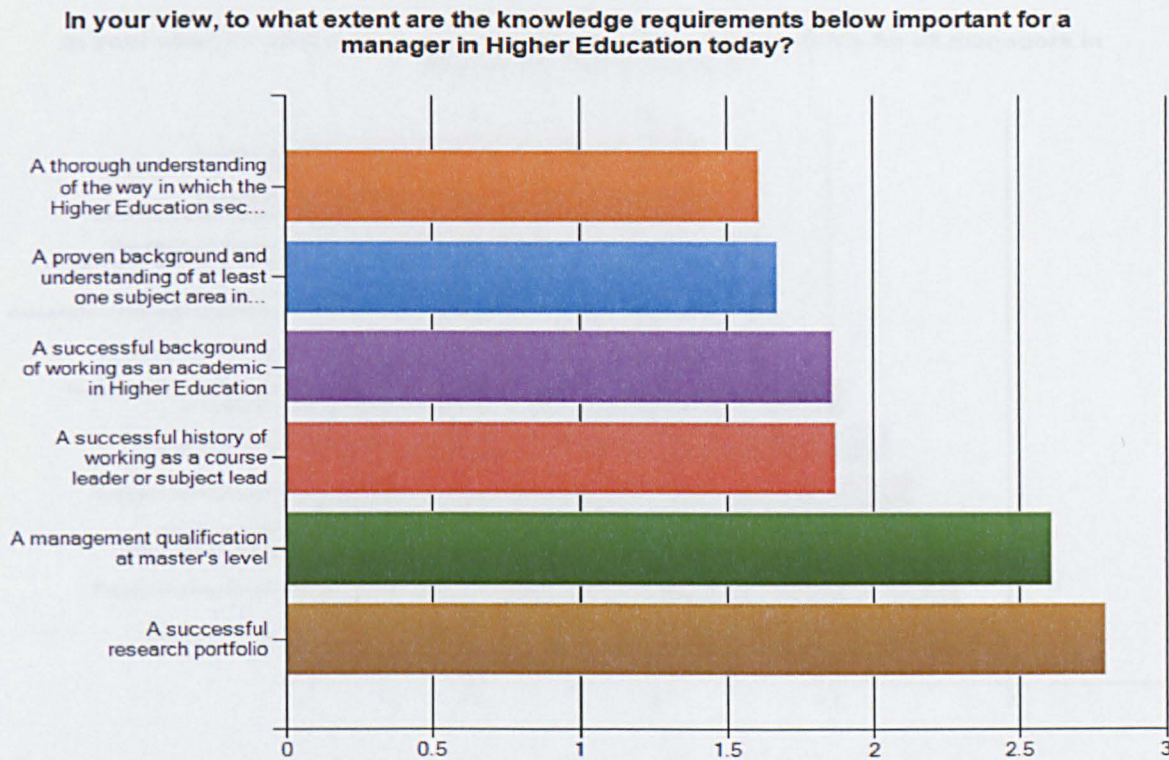
Average of the scores assigned by academics where 1=most important and 4=least important

Knowledge requirements

Respondents were asked what knowledge requirements were important for a management position. The chart overleaf shows which were considered the most and least important, with the lowest score signifying the factor considered to be the most important.

The additional comments provided by respondents did not add any further richness to the data and several were comments in relation to skills (e.g. strategic planning, listening) and attributes (e.g. inspirational) which were then covered in the following two questions of the survey.

Figure 8.6: Knowledge: requirements for managers of HE



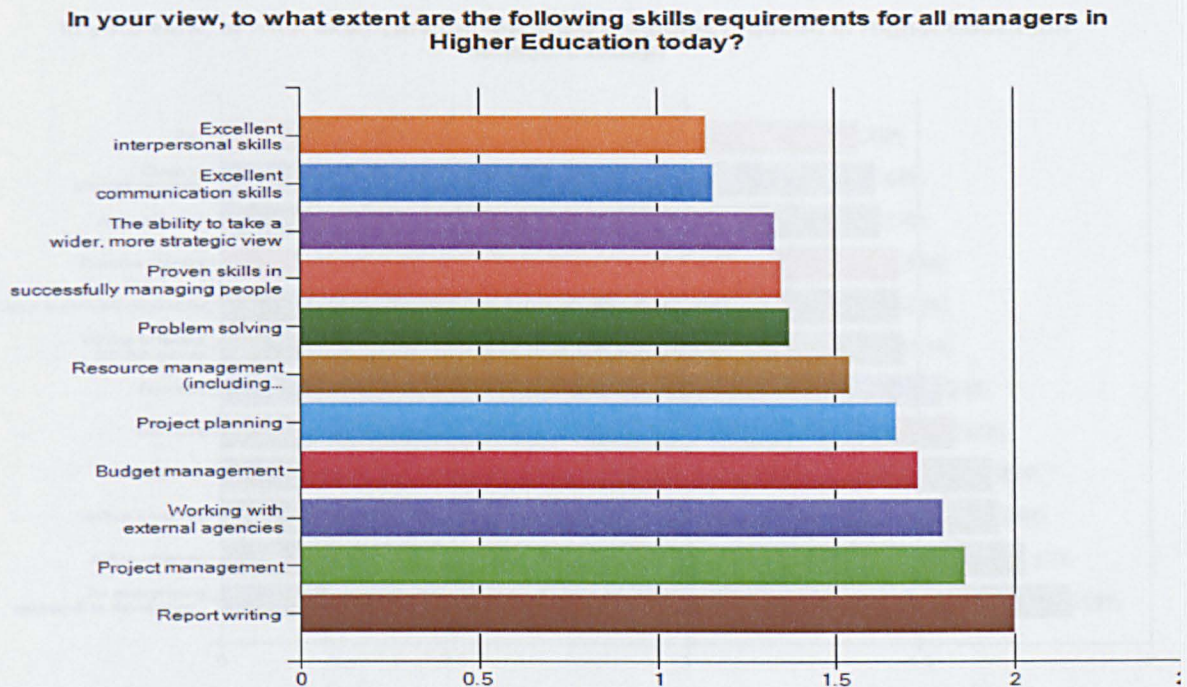
Average of the scores assigned by academics where 1=most important and 4=least important

The results above clearly show that the factor considered to be the least important was 'a successful research portfolio' and the most important 'a thorough understanding of the way in which the higher education sector works'.

Skills requirements

Respondents were asked to rate the skills requirements for HE managers.

Figure 8.7: Skills: requirements for managers of HE



Average of the scores assigned by academics where 1=most important and 4=least important

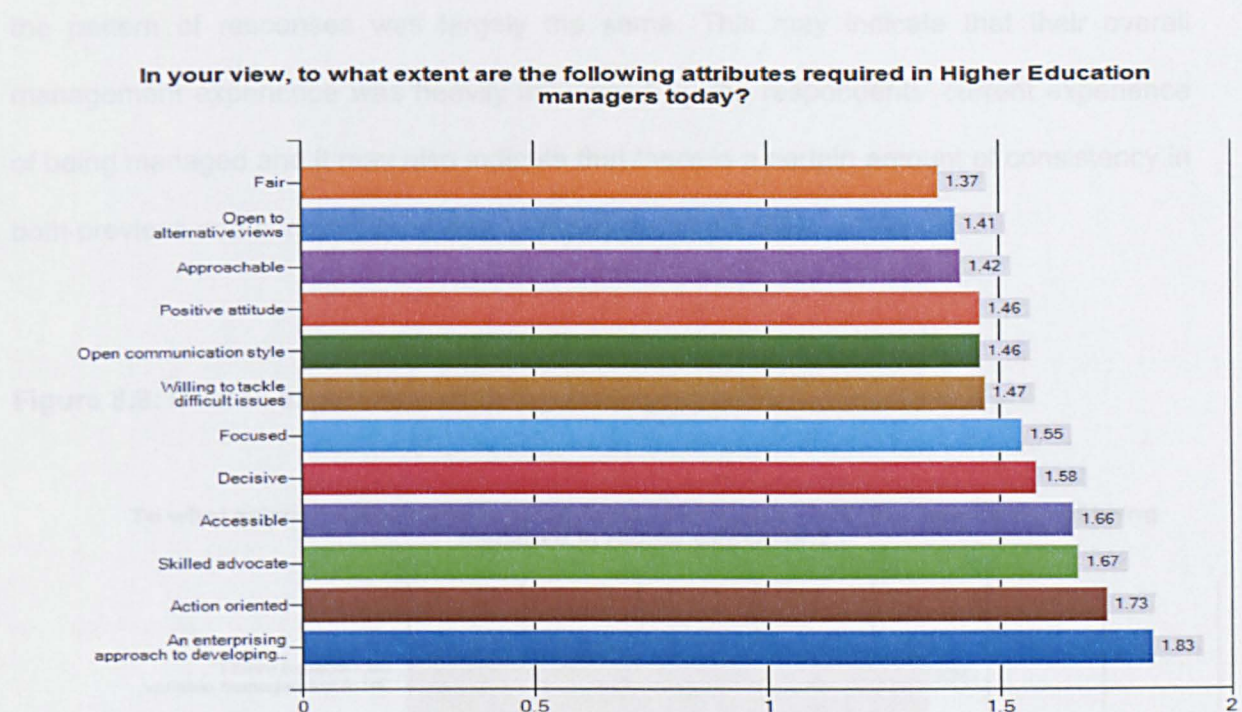
The skills considered the most important by academics were interpersonal and communication skills and the least important was report writing.

Attributes of managers

There was little distinction between the ratings of importance in all the attributes listed, with the 83% of respondents scoring each of the criteria as either very important or important.

The figure below shows that the scores range between 1.37 and 1.83 only which demonstrates how respondents on average considered the attributes to be of almost equal importance.

Figure 8.8: Attributes: requirements for managers of HE



Average of the scores assigned by 79 academics where 1=most important and 4=least important.

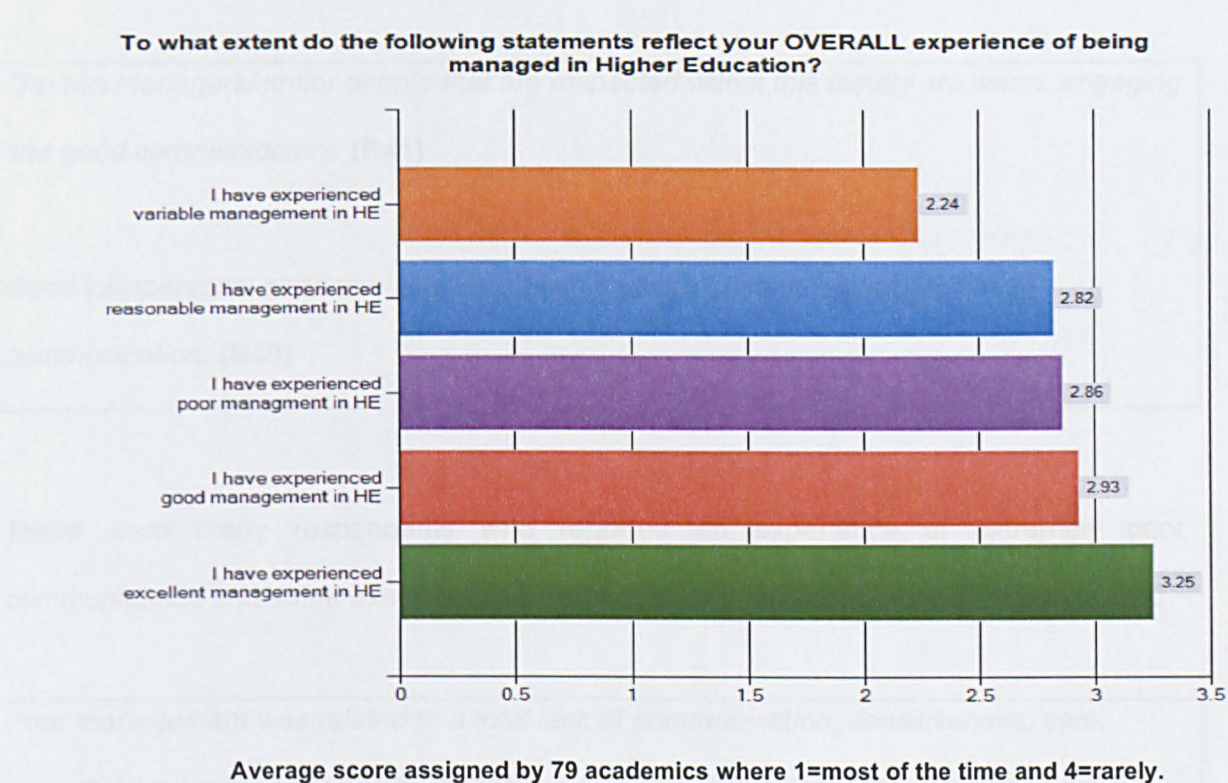
On reflection, it may have been preferable to ask respondents to rate each of the scores on knowledge, skills and attributes in an order of importance. The latter approach was considered at the time of constructing the questionnaire but was felt to be too complicated and time consuming and may have deterred respondents from completing the survey in full.

Academics' experience of management

Respondents rated their overall experience of management. The figure below shows how the majority of academics were more likely to have experienced variable management in HE than to have experienced excellent management in HE; 39% had rarely experienced excellent management and 26% stated that they had experienced poor management always or most of the time.

When asked to comment in the same way on their current experience of being managed, the pattern of responses was largely the same. This may indicate that their overall management experience was heavily influenced by the respondents' current experience of being managed and it may also indicate that there is a certain amount of consistency in both previous and current experience of management in HE.

Figure 8.9: Overall experience of being managed in HE



The last section of the questionnaire asked respondents to provide comments using **free text on any views and experiences they had of leadership and management in HE** in order to help illustrate the knowledge, skills and attributes they believed to be required for leaders and managers currently working in the sector.

74 respondents added comments under this section and these have been analysed by reading and re-reading and using manual coding, which is enabled by the Survey Monkey software.

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the coding: communication, supporting your people, bullying and criteria for selection of managers. These are explored further below.

Communication: 27 respondents made comments related to communication (coded as: Communication, Open and Transparent, Clarity, and Listening).

This is evidently an aspect of management that was felt very strongly to be a critical skill.

The following quotes support this:

The two managers/senior people that are respected within this faculty are warm, engaging and good communicators. (R41)

Good interpersonal skills are central to being a good manager, along with open communication. (R40)

There were many respondents who reported an experience of extremely poor communication and some examples of direct quotations are given below to illustrate this:

Poor management was related to a total lack of communication, sensitiveness, care, consultation, interpersonal skills. (R71)

There are at least half of our team currently actively looking for other jobs - I don't think she [manager] has any idea because she doesn't listen to us. (R35)

In my experience HE management has been poor. In particular communicating, inadequate briefing on projects, unapproachable when asking for clarification... (R18)

Supporting your people: 27 respondents made comments which were related to understanding and support of the people managed (coded as Know Your Staff, Empowerment, Trust, Climate of Growth, Mentoring, People Management, Empathy, Motivator)

Most of the comments were related to this being a critical management skill, which some had experienced positively in their managers:

My manager is very supportive of her staff's personal development and is keen to see people achieve their potential. (R17)

Believe in empowerment and see it through. Create a climate where each individual can grow according to their strengths. Celebrate achievement [of team members] and reward initiative. (R13)

Bullying: 13 comments referred directly to the respondents' experiences of a bullying management culture. This represents more than 17% of the respondents who completed this section of the survey.

The manager was out of their depth and utilised micro-management techniques to unsettle staff; they bullied experienced staff, passed blame and made life difficult. (R14)

A manager that is dictatorial, volatile, bullying, repressive, incapable of making strategic decisions and demotivational; staff go in fear of criticism or even abuse; consequently, initiative has been repressed and colleagues simply fulfil the requirements of their contract, and no more. (R20)

My experiences of management in HE has been almost exclusively bad. Senior managers have emphasised micro-management and excessively severe punitive measures for relatively minor infractions. (R50)

Bullying, intimidation, blame culture, overwork, stress build ups, very poor level of management training. (R62)

It was evident from the responses in the questionnaire data that the way in which a manager conceptualises their role had an impact on the way in which they behaved with the staff. In particular, there was reference on several occasions to the concept of 'control' within a 'hierarchy', a behaviour which relates to a bullying approach.

My work is managed by senior managers who believe I must be given orders and controlled. (R38)

There needs to be far more 'management by walking around' and interface with all levels of works rather than top-down hierarchy. (R16)

...the role of a manager is to facilitate the contribution of colleagues (who are often seen as 'subordinates') to the core business, not one who is considered superior to those he, or she, manages. (R20)

This contrasted with examples provided of managers' behaviours which illustrated a completely different approach to management, which have been provided under 'supporting your people'.

Criteria for selection of managers: 15 respondents referred to the basis on which managers should be selected in HE, including their ability to be inspirational, good decision makers, good administrators and able to develop business through an external presence.

The comments demonstrate a view from many academics that managers are selected for the role on the basis of the longevity of their time working in HE, rather than for their explicit management skills:

...a more robust process exploring their actual abilities to deliver a leadership role - assumptions are often made that a good academic will be a good leader and that is true across all sectors! (R1)

Most HE managers are so because they have come up through the academic route, being promoted on merit as an academic, rather than in terms of holding the necessary management or leadership skills. (R40)

It is my view that staff who have been a length of time in an organisation are promoted more because of that than have the desired attributes of a manager and leader. (R59)

The limitations of the narrative survey data collected in this way include an inability to interrogate the data any further. Probing during the interviews helped to clarify answers and share meanings of the questions. Surveys are liable to misinterpretation as there is no mechanism for clarifying the meaning of the questions or indeed the answers provided (Sapsford, 2007).

Conclusion of the online questionnaire findings

The following section explores how the questionnaire data has answered the following subsidiary questions in providing some context into which the interview data might be placed:

i) What are the perceptions within HE of the academic middle manager's role?

ii) What are the motivations and aspirations of academics to become managers?

It is considered that both questions have been partially addressed by the data analysis of the 161 questionnaires. However, the small and potentially biased sample of respondents from the three universities did *not* provide data which is generalizable to the academic communities from which the sample is drawn. As such, the data is presented with extremely limited applicability and conclusions but is provided for illustrative purposes.

Each of the subsidiary questions are addressed in turn.

i) What are the perceptions within HE of the academic middle manager's role?

The data in the questionnaires has provided a limited view of the perception of the academic manager role from the perspective of a small sample of the academic communities. The skills, knowledge and attributes featuring as most important for the role included integrity, openness, communication and interpersonal skills.

However, a weakness in the closed questions is that the knowledge, skills and attributes were already provided on the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to rate their importance to the role. Whilst it was possible to rank the variables in order of perceived importance, there was little to distinguish between many of them in relation to the relative importance. This demonstrated the potential artificiality of attempting to apply a numeric ranking system to a variable which has no measurable objective value.

Arguably, the free text beneath each question is more helpful in capturing additional aspects of knowledge, skills and attributes which were not given to be rated in the questionnaire. This is indeed where the illustrations of management were most clearly articulated, with many examples of good experiences of management being given.

However, experiences were clearly variable and the reference to controlling and bullying behaviour by managers was the most striking finding in the analysis of the narrative data. This was explained by some as being the inevitable consequence of not having the skills and attributes to be a manager, whilst others saw it as part of a wider cultural issue in HE.

Again, the small numbers involved in the survey and the potential personal motivations to contribute to the research are significant factors in the interpretations of the data. These findings cannot be applied to the whole academic communities from which the sample was drawn but do provide a limited insight into the views of a small number of academics.

ii) What are the motivations and aspirations of academics to become managers?

Based on Hotho et al's (2008) review of the literature on HE management, it might have been expected that respondents would not hold any aspirations to move into management from their current academic roles. Indeed, Hotho et al (2008) had identified that management was an alien role for an academic.

However, this was not reflected in the findings of the survey. A small number of respondents identified that they had already applied for a management post and a small number of others felt ready to apply for a management post or might consider a management role in the future.

Again, it cannot be concluded from the data that this accurately represents the views of the entire academic community of the universities involved in the study. However, it does indicate that management is viewed as a career option for some academics and consideration might be given to how academics in this position are supported to develop into management roles.

The motivations of those who were interested in moving into management highlighted that the most significant motivator was being in a position to support fellow academics and the least was salary and status. Again, there are implications for the recruitment to the HE middle manager posts if the motivations of the potential applicants are known and are in accordance with the requirements of the role.

The findings in relation to motivation are in alignment with the motivating factors for existing managers in the literature (Deem et al, 2007) where salary and status were found to be the least influential factors in the applications for the roles.

Having provided some contextual material, the following chapter moves to the presentation of the research data and explores how the interview data were analysed.

9. Analysis of the Data: Interviews

This chapter covers the analysis of the interview data. The profile of the interview participants and the way in which the data were analysed is presented, along with the findings. The way in which these findings align with or differ from previous research presented in the literature is explored and the chapter concludes with a summary of the most significant findings in relation to professional practice.

The first section summarises the profile of the interviewees and is based in the biographical data collected at the start of each interview.

Profile of the sample

Twenty six middle managers were interviewed. The group, employed as heads of school or equivalent title, were from three post 1992 universities in England. The following provides a profile of the sample.

Position in management

Seventeen middle managers were 'first line' managers, meaning that there were no other line managers beneath them in the university hierarchy. However, there is some contention in the definition of a manager in HE, with some in the sample considering the position of course or programme leader to be a management position, albeit without line management responsibility.

The remaining nine middle managers were the next in line within the hierarchy, that is, they were the line managers of first line managers but were at least two management positions away from the Senior Management Team of the university.

Gender

There were twelve male and fourteen females, with the following split in management positions:

Table 9.1: Gender and management positions.

	Male	Female
Frontline Manager	9	8
Second line manager	3	6

Age

The age of the sample ranged from below 35 years to over 66 years. The table below shows that there were fewer people in the extreme age brackets as might be expected, with academics entering management as a progression point in their career and with retirement in HE having been at 60 years for the majority of the new universities, until recent changes to pension conditions and the lifting of the compulsory age of retirement.

Table 9.2: Age profile of the interviewees.

Age bracket (years)	Number of interviewees
30-35	1
36-40	3
41-45	3
46-50	5
51-55	6
56-60	4
61-65	2
66-70	2
Total	26

Subject discipline

There were 24 subjects identified by the managers as their background discipline. These ranged from humanities, art, design and production to health and social care, teaching and business management. There appeared to be no bias in the subject areas with a wide range of professional backgrounds and subject disciplines.

Number of people managed

The number of people managed was defined by the number of people the manager was responsible for directly line managing on a day-to-day basis and where they were also responsible for undertaking their annual appraisal. This ranged from 3 to 48, with the majority of managers responsible for the management of up to 15 members of staff; 18 of the 26 interviewees were in this category.

A difference was noted between universities, with two of the three universities having a higher number of people to directly line manage. This clearly related to the management structure in place at the three institutions, with one having a very 'flat' managerial structure and a consequential high number of people to manage, a factor referred to by all participants in the study when discussing 'people management' responsibilities.

Table 9.3: Number of people managed.

Number of people managed	Number of interviewees
1-5	4
6-10	7
11-15	7
16-20	3
21-25	2
26-30 (27)	1
31-35 (35)	1
36-40	0
41-45	0
46-50 (48)	1
Total	26

Previous experience as a manager

Twenty of the 26 interviewees had experience in a professional role prior to joining the higher education sector. Of those 20, 13 (66%) had also worked as a manager in their previous career. This may indicate that there is a tendency to apply the management skills gained during a previous career once in the HE environment. However, this is speculation and as there is no comparative data available in this study from academics who were managers and chose not to pursue management in HE.

Six of the 26 managers who had started their employment in the FE or HE sectors as teachers after their first degrees and had never left the sector, worked their way to management via a range of routes within the sectors. These have been identified as 'career academics' in the data.

The lowest number of years employed in HE before becoming a manager was 4 years – this was the youngest member of the sample who had joined from being a junior manager in a professional setting.

Length of time in Higher Education

The managers were asked how long they had been working in the HE sector and there was a wide variation. The career managers were more likely to have been in HE for longer, as the figures in the table overleaf demonstrate.

Table 9.4: Length of time in HE.

Number of years in HE	Number of interviewees
7-10	6
11-15	8 (of which, one career academic)
16-20	4
21-25	4 (of which, one career academic)
26-30	2 (both career academics)
31+	2 (both career academics)
Total	26

Length of time as a manager

The interviewees were skewed towards relatively new managers with 5 years or less in post (15). This was probably due to the relatively newly implemented management structure in one of the universities.

Table 9.5: Length of time as a manager in HE.

Time as a manager in HE (years, rounded to nearest whole number)	Number of interviewees
1-2	5
3-5	10
6-10	5
11-15	4
16+	2
Total	26

Number of HE management positions in career

The discussion on previous roles led to much debate on the definition of manager. Many of the interviewees defined their previous role of portfolio, course or programme leader as a managerial role because they had responsibility to co-ordinate staff to deliver a programme, even if they had no direct line management responsibilities for those academics. Many considered that the skills needed to manage this process were indeed management skills which were transferable to the first line manager role.

Table 9.6: Number of management positions in HE

Management positions in HE (total posts)	Number of interviewees
1	7
2	13
3	2
4	2
5	1 (career academic)
6	1 (career academic)
Total	26

Hours of teaching

The area of scheduled teaching was highly variable and one which gave rise to much discussion. In some cases there was a correlation with the number of people being managed. For example, the manager with the largest number of direct reports (48) was also teaching 3 scheduled hours per week, while the managers with fewer direct reports tended to have a higher number of scheduled teaching hours. However, there was no consistency in the correlation of direct reports and scheduled teaching hours in the sample and this is one of the areas which was highly contested and debated in the interviews, with one wishing for no teaching and others wishing to retain as much teaching as possible as this was the original reason that they came into HE.

Many of the interviewees spoke of the manager being ultimately responsible for cover for shortages of staff, through sickness or vacancies, and that teaching responsibilities increased at times where there were gaps in the timetables.

Table 9.7: Scheduled weekly teaching hours

Scheduled teaching hours per week	Number of interviewees
0 and ad hoc	5
Up to 5	9
6-10	7
11-12	5
Total	26

The following section describes the way in which the narrative data were transcribed and analysed, supported by the use of the software 'Atlas.ti'.

Analysis of the interview data

The transcribed interviews were returned from the professional transcriber within 10 days and the quality of the transcriptions was found to be excellent when compared to the audio files. The interviews were each listened to again with the transcript available for any corrections. This provided another opportunity for reflection on the themes emerging from the data as part of the formal stage of data analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

After 15 interviews had been conducted, time was taken to read all the transcripts as a collective document in order to get a sense of the data collected and the emerging themes. All transcripts were then re-read during the process of coding when all interviews had been transcribed.

Themes which began to emerge in the pilot study and in the early stages of the main study persisted in the formal coding and analysis. The central and most persistent related to line management, including people management, interpersonal skills and the challenges of 'managing difficult people'. One of the terms used spontaneously by two of the early interviewees was 'herding cats' as a way of describing their experience of managing academics, a term I first heard from an HE manager many years ago.

The software programme ATLAS.ti was used to assist in the analysis of the interview data. ATLAS.ti proved to be intuitive to learn and although it required no formal teaching, the coding methods were supported by Saldana's (2009) instructive manual. The terminology used in the software is similar to that used in GTM, with 'coding' and 'axial coding' used to manage the grouping of the codes and 'memos' to assist with linking ideas that arise during the coding process.

All 26 interviews were loaded into the software, where they were read, re-read and coded over a three day period. This resulted in 279 codes being used in the initial stage. The software allows the researcher to see all quotes attributed to the codes and so many codes were merged immediately after the initial coding was undertaken, resulting in 210 codes remaining. Merged codes included, for example, 'language' and 'use of language', where a second code had been created which had the same meaning as another.

In using the software, the quotes against the codes are always accessible, so the quotes for the codes were checked before merger to ensure the coding of the text was consistent after merger.

The next stage was to group the codes in a process known as axial coding, with codes grouped according to associations. This process resulted in 13 'categories' being created

with the 210 codes distributed between them. This process ensured that there was still a really clear coverage of all the coding of the data.

Table 9.8: Categories and associated codes in stage one of axial coding

Categories (13)	Number of associated codes
Attributes	31
Business skills	9
Conceptualising management	17
Management skills and knowledge	26
Managing up	12
People management	23
Protection of discipline	6
Reasons for becoming a manager	12
Stresses	19
Support	17
Transition to management	17
Understanding the context of HE	14
Working hours	7
Total	210

However, whilst this provided a clear overview of emerging themes, there was too much data and it was recognised that not all data was relevant and meaningful. For example, some codes had only been used once in all 26 transcripts and could not therefore be considered to be contributing to a consistent and repeated theme in the data.

A decision was then made to consider each of the codes where there were fewer than three quotes associated with the code and to look at merging with other codes or to delete.

Table 9.9: Categories and associated codes in stage two of axial coding.

Categories (13)	Number of associated codes
Attributes	16
Business skills	3
Conceptualising management	3
Management skills	16
Managing up	3
People management	17
Protection of discipline	2
Reasons for becoming a manager	9
Stresses	13
Support	9
Transition to management	7
Understanding the context and operation of HE	12
Working hours	3
Total	113

Further merging of the categories was then considered as there was an overlap in, for example, business skills and management skills, with the former considered to be one element of the latter.

The merging of categories resulted in the following summary (overleaf):

Table 9.10: Categories and associated codes in stage three of axial coding.

Categories (8)	Number of associated codes
Attributes	16
Conceptualising management *	10
Management skills **	18
People management	17
Stresses	13
Support	9
Transition to management	7
Understanding the context and operation of HE	12
Total	102

* Merger of 'conceptualising management', 'reasons for becoming a manager' and 'working hours'

** Merger of 'management skills', 'business skills', 'managing up', and 'protection of discipline'

Where categories were merged, the most appropriate name to describe the new and larger category was retained, even where the category name was originally associated with the largest number of codes. Where two or more categories were merged, only the axial code was added as a new code to the merged unit, rather than all the codes associated with the axial code. This therefore resulted in a further reduction of codes associated directly with the remaining eight categories.

It is important to note that the question regarding equality and diversity in the interview schedule did not produce data to support the previous research of McTavish and Miller (2008) and Deem (2009). This may reflect the profile of middle managers in the study and the senior leadership of the three universities of the study, two of which had female Vice Chancellors.

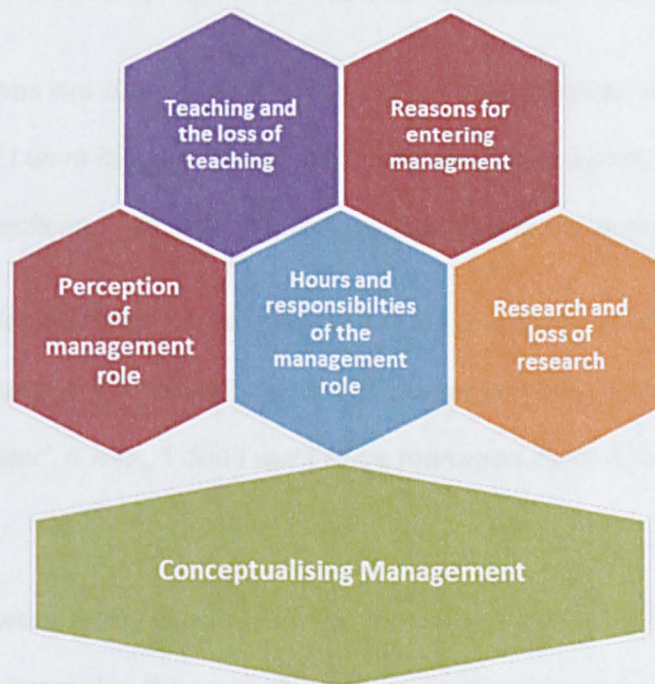
The following is an exploration of the data, taking each category in turn, in order to provide an overall analysis of the interview data and to show the relationships between the categories.

Conceptualising management

Managers discussed a range of issues related to the way in which they perceived their roles, the reasons they became managers, the impact of being a manager on their role in teaching and research and their identity as an academic. This section also provides some insight into the day-to-day role of the academic manager and the impact of work on their personal lives.

The following figure shows the elements from which the category was constructed.

Figure 9.1: Conceptualising management.



The managers spoke about their **reasons for entering management** and it was clear that the seminal research conducted by Deem (2006) in the late 1990s and more recently

confirmed by Floyd (2011) is still very relevant today. There were a number of 'career managers' who saw their management post as a step towards the next position in the HE management structure and had clear aspirations for senior management posts. For example:

I would like to go as far as I can within the institution and that depends on what is available to me really. I mean, I would like to end up as some sort of dean... R6

I suppose it's thinking that you could do the job! That's the starting point. And actually quite enjoying doing the managerial jobs. Looking for a new challenge, I suppose you get so far as being an academic lecturer and then I realised I quite enjoyed doing some of the management type of things. R10

There were also those who could be described as 'reluctant managers':

No, it was not an over aspiration, not an over ambition even. I suppose in lots of ways, if I were faced with the set of circumstances again, I don't know I'd make the same decision. Not sure. Really question that at the moment. R7

And I decided that I would rather go for it than be managed by the person who would have got if I hadn't. So that's perverse rather than considered 'I want to be a manager', it was, 'I don't want to be managed by that person'. R11

Finally, there were many who could be considered the 'good citizen' manager, with a commitment to improving the work of the team and giving something back:

Nobody else in the team put their hand up for it. So very, very deep sense that it was not a time to be without a manager that knew something about (subject). R3

I think fairly influential people had left andthey were worried about the fact that they were understaffed and we had lost experienced people so it seemed the logical, and it did seem nobody would be responsible and I do have a huge investment in this department I have been here 16 years of my life and I do care very much... R20

The motivations for working in HE management rarely included financial reward which in 2012 was an uplift of approximately 15% in salary from principal lecturer to first line manager, but there was repeated mention of the term 'challenge' and making a difference to the area managed:

I still do not aspire necessarily to particular levels, but I do aspire to new challenges. R16

I wanted a new challenge really, I wanted a new project as it were, a new five year project! So yes, this job came up. So this is it. R14

It was also clear that the individuals' **perception of their management** role was a very personal issue, positioned in a world of contradictions. It was often a welcome challenge from the routine of teaching and provided an additional sense of personal satisfaction through recognition of a wider contribution to the work of university. However, there was often an expression of regret with regard to the consequent and inevitable loss of teaching and opportunity for research.

Teaching and the loss of teaching was the single most common reference in relation to the perception of management; the managers spoke about this area with passion and conflict.

There was also a view expressed by almost every interviewee that teaching should be retained at every level of management, even if it was a guest lecture only, to ensure that managers were in touch with the reality of teaching students. It was recognised that whole module teaching with a weekly commitment to the classroom became impossible beyond the frontline manager position.

Every manager interviewed had teaching responsibilities, whether this was flexible doctoral supervision or full module delivery on a weekly timetable.

...my primary focus was always 'I enjoy teaching' and got a particular buzz from that and wouldn't have been seeking any role that would take me away completely from that...at most, taken me half from it. R2

I still teach and I enjoy teaching. It's not something that I would like to give up completely. I enjoy the relationship with the students, I really and truly do. R8

There was just one frontline manager who expressed the view that managers should not have regular teaching commitment:

Sometimes it can be overwhelming, especially if you've got teaching on top of that. I do believe, you know, that managers shouldn't be teachers. R12

The enjoyment of teaching and contact with students was evident in the interviews and the reduction in teaching which accompanied a move to a management role was seen as one of the disadvantages.

I like teaching, that's why I came into academia, why I stayed in academia. R21

It was notable that there was no correlation between the number of teaching hours allocated to a manager and their responsibilities in relation to the number of people being managed and the number of students and programmes in the unit being managed.

Research was viewed similarly for most but without the emotions evident when discussing teaching. This is likely to be because research was not identified as the primary reason for entering HE, in the same way as teaching and the support of students was highlighted as the main purpose for most academics.

And the other thing that I ... admit I feel a bit resentful about, is my own research. I enjoy researching, I like publishing, I like writing, I like publishing. I published last year. This year I haven't even, I will not have a chance to think about even trying to do any research, no less write something for publication. So in a way I almost feel as if something has been taken away from me. R8

So the thing that suffered the most is the research. ... I'm not going to make the REF – I've got research outputs but they are not at the standard that will allow me to submit the REF. R10

There was also mention of research skills “slipping away” (R14) due to the lack of time, leading to some managers going to extreme lengths to maintain their research prolife:

I've made sure I have done research, sometimes it's the weekends, sometimes it's during evening, late evening, waking up 3 a.m. in the morning. R18

Regret at the loss of teaching and research after a move into a management role aligns with the findings of the study by Santiago et al (2006). Their study of 58 middle managers in HE identified teaching and research as responsibilities which continued to give the most satisfaction, above the managerial aspects of the role.

The hours and responsibilities of the management role impacted greatly on people's personal lives. There was an acceptance by most that the hours required to fulfil the role

were way beyond the contracted hours. This finding concurs with Martin's (2007) research where respondents identified the stressful nature of the long working hours as a middle manager in HE.

So I'm happy to come in at half seven and not leave until half seven. But would try not to work too much at weekends. There might be certain weekends. R26

And doing TRAC¹. and it would regularly come out at, if I was lucky, 50 hours a week. R24

You know I work six and seven day weeks as a matter of course. You know it means I don't see as much of my family and friends as I would perhaps like to. R17

Deem (2007) had also identified 60 to 70 hours per week as the norm in HE management in the late 1990s. Since then, the increased availability of IT in the home and an ease of remote connection to the HEI has now enabled the manager's work to continue beyond the office. This is perhaps not unusual for many academics in HE but was a powerful focus for discussion and one which had a major personal impact as the researcher as I continued to reflect on the interviews.

I was struck each time by the sheer commitment of the managers to getting the work done, very often at a cost to their personal lives which they accepted as part of the role. It was a 'way of being' for the managers interviewed and there was an acceptance that this went with the job of a manager in HE.

The overwhelming view of the managers was that long working hours were an expectation of the middle manager role in HE, no matter how skilled, senior or experienced.

¹ TRAC: Transparent Approach to Costing. See Glossary.

And you get back to your desk at 6 o'clock. I mean, been in meetings all day and you've got 150 emails to skim through and then you've got to download this document and that document. R20

...if you count all the times when, you know, I go home and I'm still working at eight, nine o'clock at night, doing emails and things like that. R25

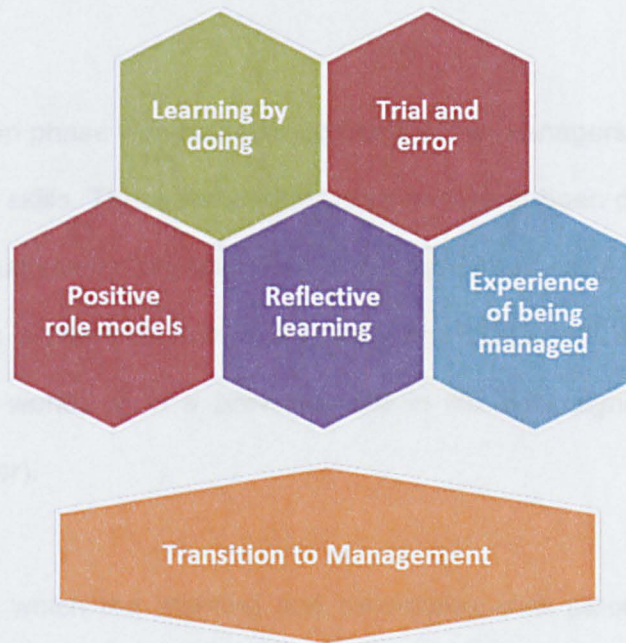
I was moved by two interviews with middle managers, one of whom had reduced their hours to half time, and another who had deliberately moved out of the hierarchy. Both reflected back on the hours they had undertaken in their previous roles and regretted the impact it had on themselves and their families. Both expressed the regret with considerable emotion and this is a reminder that interview transcripts without the digital recording cannot illustrate the depth of emotions felt.

Transition to management

There was much in the interviews which related to the way in which the managers recalled moving into management positions and the experiences which helped them in the transition to becoming responsible for the unit and the line management of the people within it.

The figure overleaf shows the elements from which this category was constructed.

Figure 9.2: Transition to Management



One of the ways in which they felt prepared for the role of middle manager was having been a course or a programme leader. Whilst they may not have experienced line management in that role, they had experienced having to organise a programme for students and this involved ensuring that the correct resources were in place to deliver the programme.

The way in which management skills were learned when starting as a manager was referred to as '**trial and error**' and '**learning by doing**'. The managers described a rich picture of experiential learning and where there was mentorship offered, this was regarded as positive and supportive. However, there were managers who had no mentorship, no preparation for the role and were left to 'sink or swim'. By definition, all those who were interviewed had survived the initial period of transition as the minimum time in the post was three years. As one manager described it:

...a lot of good judgement comes from experience that is based on bad judgement and I think there is an element of that too, I think that's probably recognised in the first six months or whatever that has to have some learning curve. R2

The transition phase was however one where the managers were able to draw on existing transferable skills. These were referred to as having been developed in their personal life outside the university (organisational skills needed to run a home, raise a family and work full time); in a previous role in a profession outside of HE (such as a manager in the commercial world) or in a previous role in HE with significant responsibility (such as course leader).

The way in which the learning and developing took place in the early stages of their appointment was through **reflective learning**. Many reported that the behaviour that they had most modified since the early days of management was responding rapidly to issues, rather than taking time to reflect and consider and deliberate before coming to a conclusion about the response. Learning not to react to issues which appeared pressing at the time was a gradual process and one which was perceived as a mark of achievement.

But I think, like I say, the biggest change is sort of biting my lip more, just walking away from something, sleeping on something and coming back to it the following day, not firing my mouth off as quickly as I used to. R13

One of the ways in which people reflected on their transition into management was on **the way they had been managed**:

So I think being managed for quite a few years was a kind of an apprenticeship I suppose because you, even when you're being badly managed, you can say, "I'd never manage like that. I'd never want to be made to feel like that. And I would

never, you know, sit behind that great big desk and speak to people like that". So there's lots of things that you've got on a mental checklist that you can, you can look back at. R11

This was a position I recognised as being very helpful in my own transition to management and was the starting point for the study. Having observed such variation in management abilities and seeing the impact of management styles on the culture of the organisation, I had been motivated to understand more about the perceptions of management in HE and to develop an evidence base for their improved support.

Looking to other managers as **positive role models** was very important to the managers who reflected back on positive experiences they had had with previous line managers before they entered management roles themselves, and many were able to tell stories of whom they had learned from and how this had impacted on their own development. This emphasises the importance of both having had significant access to a good role model and having the reflective ability to learn from that experience:

... and the people in the way that they dealt with those situations and you were party to it and you saw those decisions and how they'd got to those things. And you think, 'Yes I can see how you did that.' And that was important for me to acquire that knowledge, attribute... R13

I suppose the nurture thing is about having role models that can develop something that may be a weakness or you hadn't had to kind of take seriously before. And I think in my last couple of jobs I've had people that I could really look up to and be inspired by and learn from, that's very important, I think. R15

The issue of knowing the point at which they had successfully transitioned into a management role was identified by some as a critical incident – a moment when they

realised that they had respect from the team and recognition of their leadership was confirmed:

And that's when I did feel that I got respect from, from people because, you know, it's a nightmare organising before they [professional body inspectorate] arrive and then when they're here, it's about, you know...So I think, I think that's probably a critical incident of when I was accepted as a leader. R16

The findings in relation to the transition to the role correlate with the position paper by Betts et al (2009) who identified that in American universities there was an absence of organised and structured support for career pathways in HE leadership and management.

Inman (2007) also concluded in her research of 28 middle managers that there was a need for them to be supported through the transition period and suggested formal mentoring and the opportunity for sharing experiences with a peer group.

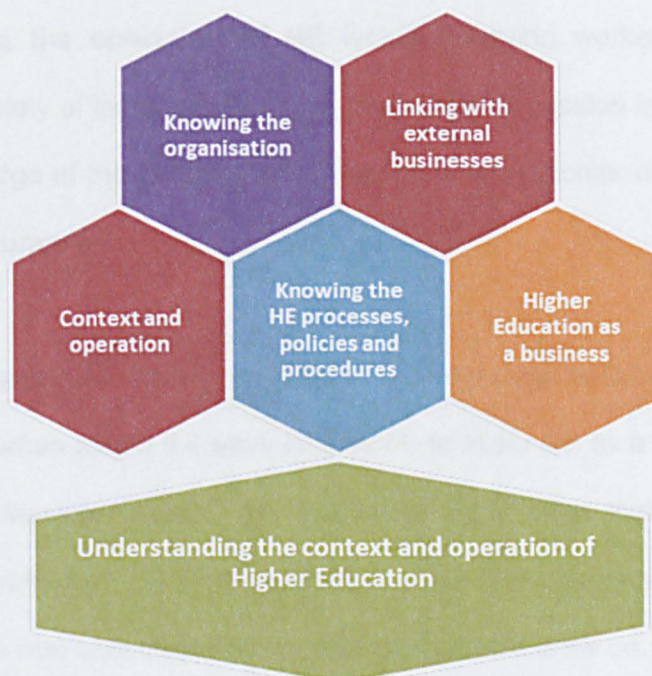
The opportunity to reflect on management experiences through action learning in this way was proposed by Gentle (2007) after his research in HE and this is now a facility provided within the LFHE programmes.

Understanding the context and operation of Higher Education

The participants referred frequently to **understanding the context** in which they were working, understanding the broader picture of HE and being networked both internally and externally.

The following chart shows the elements most often used by the respondents in describing their understanding of the context and operation of HE.

Figure 9.3: Understanding the context and operation of HE



This included having an understanding of both the wider context of HE and the current issues in funding and government policy concerning recruitment and student number caps, as well as the position and perceived status of the university in the sector.

I think there's knowledge around basically policy issues; there's knowledge about the, you know, where the institution sits; it's knowledge about the strategic direction. So there's those wider knowledge elements. So there's the sort of narrow, related to your field, related to your area, and then more widely about higher education in general, your own institution. R14

So it's knowledge of the internal environment, it's knowledge of the external environment and changes, external changes in the sector, things that we have to respond to. The funding is the obvious one, you know, but it's also things that are happening on the international front, if fees arrangements change, what's going to be the impact on your international student numbers, if those are important to you

as manager of a department within higher education. So internal and external factors. **R19**

Understanding the operation of HE included having worked through the university system in a variety of increasingly senior roles. The discussion included the importance of having knowledge of the systems and processes, in particular of curriculum development and quality assurance.

It was an unexpected finding therefore, and not one which had been found in the literature, that when asked if it were *impossible* to enter HE as a manager from industry or a relevant professional sector, the managers were clear that this was *not* the case. Indeed, many reflected this view before this issue was raised as a specific question and there were also real examples that the managers could draw on.

Whilst understanding the world of education was considered important to some, others identified that it would be possible for a manager to be appointed to a middle management post without having worked in HE previously and to learn about the business of HE.

I think you have to know about education. I think you do have to understand the world of education because parachuting people in from outside is really difficult.

R22

This contrasted to the overwhelming view that it would be entirely possible for – and indeed there were real examples of – a professional entering an HE management post with no prior employment in HE. The condition of this view was that the person would need to have support from their direct reports who had significant academic experience.

But do I think somebody could come in from the outside and be a manager within HE, I'd say they probably could because ultimately there's very similar sorts of

skills, but it's, I think, how you apply them in the first instance that may, may be the difference. R15

It was striking there was repeated reference to the issue concerning knowledge and understanding which could be acquired from a person entering HE management from a management post outside of HE. Some interviewees pointed to evidence that this was happening in the sector in order to bring industry closer to HE:

They've brought in a dean who had completely a business background, not higher education, but her associate deans were the academics... R11

Another gave an example of their line manager who had not had a traditional academic career but was a very successful faculty leader:

...he came from a very different background. He was from a commercial environment....so again by his own admission, he was in virgin territory in terms of research and publication. R23

Regardless of academic background, **knowing the organisation** and how it is located in the sector was considered an essential part of the manager's knowledge base. The established 'red brick' universities versus new universities and the differences of approach to the market were discussed.

...they [red bricks] are heavily geared towards research and that is what they expect...and [friend] .. churns out continuous amounts ...it's completely different in some ways. I think we are a University but we are in a completely different market, a completely different scale, and I think that's fine. R9

It was expected that the middle manager would have a detailed understanding, not only of their position in the market but of their internal operations as an organisation and how their sphere of responsibility articulated with that wider view.

I think you're better equipped if you have a good knowledge of your own university and also other institutions. it does help if you know a lot of people across the university. And also if you know people in other institutions, I think. So I think it's, it's... a knowledge and understanding of the wider sector helps. R26

I think it is, it's just this global view isn't it, it is about having a view of the organisation rather than if you're a bit of the organisation. R12

Managers also stated that they felt more engaged with the wider organisation through having the detailed knowledge of and participating in the strategic plan and the policy making of the university.

I feel really pleased that I am in on hearing about the reason why things are changing and why policies are being made a particular way and I feel that I have more knowledge now and in fact I am part of that policy making in a far more significant way. R4

I think, as a manager, you have to be able to see what the strategic plan is for the institution and try to see how your own, you fit in to that. R3

This knowledge also extended to internal knowledge of the specific department or school and the people within it in order to ensure that you were able to make the best use of the resources available.

You have to know the internal environment of the institution in which you operate, the department that you have responsibilities for in terms of knowing their

specialisms, what their unique features are. You have to know the staff extremely well and what their strengths and capabilities are... R23

This contrasted with many managers I had experienced who spent very little time getting to know the strengths and limitations of their staff. It also resonated with the briefing managers at my employing organisation had been given in 2011 from the Chief Executive of the organisation 'Best Companies' (www.bestcompanies.co.uk) which works with organisations to assess their engagement with staff. He stated the highest performing companies have managers who know their staff well and engage with them deliberately on at least a weekly basis.

If the respondents in EU3 had been present at the above briefing and were aware of this fact, this raises a question about the validity of the responses and the potential for the respondents to be providing answers they consider are the 'correct' answers rather than their views.

This is a possible limitation in any research study where people are being asked for their views and arguably more so where the respondents are from within the researcher's own organisation (Hellawell, 2006). It was important therefore to consider this potential threat to validity in the analysis of the data and to notice any differences in the responses between those in EU3 and the other two universities. This issue is returned to in the final chapter.

There was an agreement that there was a need for middle managers to understand **HE as a business** and the need for external engagement to promote the existing business and to develop new business. This finding supports that of Hellawell and Hancock (2001) and also Middlehurst (2004) who identified the need for the diversification of income streams in HEIs as part of their generative response to the changing context of HE.

For the interviewees who had been working in the HE sector for many years, this was viewed as a significant reorientation, but all saw it in the context of responding to the changes in government policy, the consequent need to seek alternative income streams and to work more closely with industry.

We are now much more client focused, we are prepared to take those pretty tough decisions of closing courses that, you know, that aren't attracting the numbers; or redirecting resources, you know, to those areas where we seem to be tapping a richer seam, where there seems to be possibilities for development. R23

And that's, that seems to be, even more than ever now, with the whole focus on the commercial and other incoming income streams, not just looking at academia, but starting to see the university as a business. R18

Part of running the university as a business was seeing themselves as managers **linking with external businesses** and employers to develop the workforce. This was not an issue that was subject or business sector specific; it applied to all areas and reflected the change in the way universities need to operate at this point in the 21st century. This finding accords with that of Hancock and Hellawell (2003) who identified the need for middle managers in HE to become more entrepreneurial in linking HE with the external world of business.

...you can't exist in isolation without working in partnership. So again it's trying to design provision according to need and then according to regional priorities and, you know, be much more strategic about the use of our time and of our time development (sic). And you certainly couldn't have said that when I first came into higher education 23 years ago. R23

There was also a category which emerged in the analysis which concerned **knowing the HE processes, policies and procedures** and helping others with that:

And my responsibility actually is to help them [staff] navigate their way through what is an incredible bureaucratic, slow, frustrating system. I see that as my role.

R18

I'm learning all the time! I mean I've never been a very, I've never been into the quality aspects of the university, you know, minor modifications and revalidation and all of those things. But I'm now having to be. So, so I'm increasing my knowledge all the time. **R16**

It is entirely logical that the middle managers would identify knowing the processes, policies and procedures of the HEI in which they worked in order to assist the academic team they manage and direct to navigate these.

This finding also supports Jones' (2007) checklist of behaviours for a new middle manager which include the need to understand the universities policies and the wider context and operations of the department and faculty.

Management Skills

In relation to management skills, it was clear that the managers perceived their roles as highly complex but recognised that many of the skills could be held by a manager entering HE from outside the sector as they were considered to be generic skills which could be applied in the HE setting.

This finding aligns with Whitchurch's (2008) findings of '3rd space professionals' in academic management identified in the literature review.

The figure overleaf shows the elements identified by the respondents which related to generic management skills.

Figure 9.4: Management Skills



Strategic thinking and planning were seen by the respondents as an essential skill set for leading and managing their departments. The majority of the respondents' departments and schools were subject specific and engagement with the subject discipline both internally and externally occurred at the department level.

To successfully manage the discipline of the department, according to the respondents, a lead is required to engage staff, external partners and policy makers to create a vision for the department, the programmes and the students in the most appropriate way for the subject. This accords with findings of Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) and Bolden et al

(2008) that the academic manager was often the leader and protector of their subject or discipline.

This work could not be left to the whole Faculty, unless the Faculty represents just one discipline or subject because the nuances of the department are so individual and department managers were in a position to think strategically in relation to subject specific issues:

...and I think you do need to be a strategic thinker. You need to see what's round the corner. So when I say 'planning' I separate that sort of strategic thinking from planning. Planning is a process and yes it's about planning for the future, but strategic thinking is really about seeing round the corner and identifying what tomorrow's agenda is going to be... R11

I think that's a key one because we're all, you know, all the clichés, we've got lots of plates on sticks and juggling balls and all of that with our hands and our feet. So prioritisation I think is a key one. R18

Chairing skills were identified as skills for the middle manager. It was also notable that the managers' diaries were full of meetings throughout the week, many of which they chaired. They were mindful of participation and a voice for all members of the meeting as part of their management skills:

I think one of the other skills, unquestionably, is that you've got to be good at meetings. You have so many meetings that is a skill that you have got to be able to handle meetings because otherwise you waste an inordinate amount of time with side tracking, and with the best will in the world, people do like to go off on a tangent on to various things. And if you can't actually – it's a simple thing, if you can't manage a meeting, it's very difficult to get through what you need to each time, with everybody's interest. R17

In delivering the role, there was reference to the need to **manage up**, to inform upwards in the management hierarchy and to influence the decision making at a more senior level – all of which are within the expected norms of management skills. This also crosses over with the need within a university to promote and protect the subject of the department which was also raised under strategic planning.

And so I feel I've got to do a kind of persuasion job on people above me, or some of the people above me, you know, to let [subject] be a bit more visible here because it doesn't feel as if it is. And the staff don't feel as if it is, and I think that's, you know, come from various people who maybe are not that sympathetic to it. They certainly get the feeling that they're being victimised a bit. But actually I think they've been neglected. R19

However, the issue of how to manage up was not always straight forward and required the manager to develop some political skills in terms of the presentation of the information and the message to a senior level:

So there have been incidents, I don't know what sort of detail would you need, but there have been incidents in me managing upward where openness and honesty didn't work and whatever was written in the management book about dealing politically, was right. So that is a big lesson that I have learnt, I will never forget that lesson. R21

This accords with the findings of Hancock and Hellowell (2003) who found in their study of 14 HE middle managers, that in an effort to protect their departments, the managers had learned to behave in a politically astute manner when managing information within the wider university.

In referring to the need to manage up, there was also reference to the distance between senior managers and the academic staff teaching students in terms of the impact of the decisions made by managers. The following quotation sums up the views of several respondents in relation to this:

So many decisions are currently made by managers at a top level who have no idea how their decision will impact at a course level and impact on their customers the students (this has to be wrong) and seems very odd at a time when the customer experience will be so crucial as funding changes - it is also largely ineffective and one of the main reasons precious time gets wasted as we go round in circles implementing and then un-implementing decisions by various managers.

R23

Organisational skills and the ability to prioritise were also seen as critical management skills in HE, with most interviewees referring to these within the interview:

Yes I'm good at problem solving and seeing how things can be organised and arranged in order to make things work. I mean, to give you a kind of practical example, I always did the timetabling which is, you know, everybody's nightmare – but that's the sort of thing that I can really get my teeth into and sort out. **R25**

There was a sense that most of the managers really enjoyed the need to be organised and the opportunity to express their organisational skills in their management role. This was also seen as a transferable skill from their teaching role where organisational skills were learnt and practised as an academic in planning and delivering a range of modules over a period of several weeks to hundreds of students.

...I'm good at problem solving and seeing how things can be organised and arranged in order to make things work. **R5**

I think I thought I could do it. And I'm very organised, and having had what I felt were not good managers in the past, I tended to think I could do a better job than this! R16

A major difference was in organising a less boundaried and a much wider range of issues as a manager and being able to prioritise, especially as a new manager:

Probably the priorities and really knowing what the priorities are, I would guess is the most significant challenge for any new middle manageryou will be hit from a thousand sides. ...you immediately get into employment disputes and equality and diversity issues, and need to tread carefully. Thank goodness I was well prepared there. But above and beyond that, you need organisation and you need to have a clear focus. R25

The need for organisational skills had been identified in the literature. Middlehurst and Lewis (1992) found that managers needed organisational skills to maintain order and systems, which ultimately support the HEI to meet its objectives efficiently and effectively.

The importance of taking responsibility for **making decisions** was also referred to, and the recognition that the autonomy and authority to make the decisions is a pre-requisite:

I think you need to be able to make decisions. So you need autonomy. I think you need the authority to be able to deliver that in making those decisions. R21

Effective decision making was also identified by Jameson (2012) in her wide ranging research with Vice Chancellors and their academic communities, as a critical aspect of successful management in HE.

Good communication skills were identified by all the managers, often in relation to needing to communicate with academics in a way which respects their autonomy in the workplace:

Good communication skills both with those above and with colleagues. I think ... is it a skill, you need to lead by example definitely. R26

... to me, one of the most important things about management is the relationship with the staff. And I honestly think that where there's the distance between a layer of hierarchy and the next one, this is where you get lots of issues coming in. It needs to be continual communication. R6

This finding resonates that of several researchers, including Bryman (2007b), Wisniewski (2007) and Martin (2007), who identified effective skills in communication as essential to the delivery of the middle management role.

In describing their management skills the interviewees were very clear about where the skills had been acquired or developed. Some were transferable skills where the interviewees believed that the skills of a university lecturer could be applied in the manager role, albeit with a different set of pressures and responsibilities. Other skills were learned after being appointed to the management position and some were supported by formal training which is referred to in the section on support below.

One of the management skills referred to by all respondents was 'people skills'. The amount of material gathered in the interviews on this has warranted its own section. This is further justified in the analysis as a skill which is less likely to be able to be 'developed' in a manager than the management skills identified above. This then becomes relevant when discussing the findings of the research in relation to succession planning and the identification of the qualities required for a manager in HE.

People management

Managers gave many examples of the work they were doing with their teams which illustrated the critical nature of their relationships with the people they managed in achieving the goals of the department. The sort of management skills required called into question whether this was an area which could truly be learned as a management skill and whether there were certain pre-requisites that would determine an academic's potential to successfully deliver this aspect of their role.

The figure overleaf provides an illustration of the elements of people skills which have been drawn from the analysis of the interview data.

Figure 9.5: People Management



This section provides examples of the elements of people management skills that were most frequently referred to in the interviews. The importance of this category cannot be underestimated:

*I think that's probably **the** single most important thing of all of them, because a lot of the other things [that] you can acquire or you can delegate and then monitor,*

but I think it's that starting point of being able to deal with the people that makes or breaks it. R17

It was evident that the 'attributes' provided in the next section are closely related to the skills required in managing people. People skills are referred to consistently by the managers as an essential skill for the delivery of their objectives, however, this was the most challenging to articulate in terms of explaining how these skills were acquired.

Knowing your people was central to people management skills:

So it's about knowing your staff and knowing how you need to manage them. And you can't manage them collectively; you have to manage them individually in this place, whereas that's different to out in practice. I could manage a unit collectively.

R12

This manager contrasted being a manager in a nursing environment which was considered to be very different from the professional HE culture. All the people managed were nurses in both contexts, which perhaps indicates that for this manager there was a cultural shift in management style required in HE which she had not anticipated.

Translating messages from the senior management team was seen as the manager's role which sometimes was stressful when there was a clear conflict of belief:

Yes, well I think inevitably there are sometimes going to be things that perhaps you don't fully agree with or you don't feel that the senior management in the university have adequately taken account of the views of staff or how it will work on the ground. And obviously staff recognise problems, but you have to take the university's line. And so it's difficult to try and help staff adjust to whatever it is you're asking them to do. R23

You know, you do have to have the gumption or the balls to go into a room and go, 'This has happened, you're not going to like the consequence, but this is what we're going to do'. R20

The importance of ensuring that academics are provided with the information clearly and logically by their managers was also stressed:

You would need logic everywhere, but I think it is a bit more important in the academic environment because of the nature of academics, that we, that they would never simply accept things unless they – unless they start believing on it. For example, the discussions we were having on [proposed new course] that the first thing to do was to sort of make them believe that this will work, rather than saying, you know, 'This is what we have to do, and the work to do,' it wouldn't have worked. R21

This supports the findings of Kallenburg (2007) when describing the critical role of the middle manager in translating the messages from senior managers.

People skills also included the categories of **empowering, motivating, coaching and facilitating the team** as illustrated by the following examples:

The ability to empower others.....I think that's, if you can't do that, you're on a hiding to nothing. R5

One manager described the satisfaction in being able to provide positive feedback from a respected third party to boost the self-confidence of a new lecturer and described the pleasure of supporting people to grow:

And seeing that employee go, 'Oh wow, okay, cool,' is the nice side of it, that you can actually develop people, give them confidence and give them the sort of jobs, roles, projects that are going to allow them to develop their own careers, you know, the bringing people on. R20

Such behaviours related to people skills found in the analysis of the data were similar to those proposed as essential for managers in HE in McCroskey's (2008) position paper, where it is suggested that managers in HE needed to inspire, to be role models, and to enable, encourage and challenge their staff.

Performance management was seen as an issue that took an inordinate amount of the manager's time. Every manager had performance issues that they had either dealt with in the past or were currently managing.

I think in performance issues and yes it's performance issues – know what the organisation wants, how to handle it. To have a range of performance issues and to deal with them each individually, so there's something about what they're really about, how you approach them. R7

One manager described the sort of performance issue that they had experience of managing which was common to many stories told in the interviews:

Well people who are not playing the game in terms of being professional in their approach, not, not being available, not being here enough, cutting short lectures – it's so rare, and it takes a while to uncover that. R11

Of the 26 managers interviewed 9 had experience of **disciplinary matters**, either at the pre-disciplinary action plan stage or they had used the procedures leading to a formal

dismissal. The following illustrates a typical situation concerning two cases which led to the use of disciplinary procedures. The inability to undertake a role as an academic was visible to the team and led to disaffection when academics were seen as contributing equally.

I've got two people going through disciplinary. Never before, because I'm a big believer in, you know, if they get three warnings as it were. one basically can't do their job and have no interest in doing their job and have been there for 27 years without having to do their job and never been held accountable. And poor teaching and everything. And one who is a new member of staff, who is not... you know, is just not capable of doing the job...we've put them through various opportunities to develop but they just haven't taken and what have you. R17

These managers described the distractive nature of actively managing poor performance but the importance of being seen to be taking action by the staff who perceived that they were 'carrying' the poor performers in the team:

But managing one difficult employee takes far more time than managing a team of decent ones. R20

Management of poor performance was not identified as a specific theme in the HE literature reviewed, although the broader and more generic skill set of performance management, of which poor performance is one element, is presented as an essential skill by Ramsden (2005) in his book on HE leadership.

It is also recognised that whilst 'performance management' was not always referred to specifically by other authors, it may be considered to be subsumed into more inclusive references used such as 'resource managers' (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001) and

'resource development' (Benoit and Graham, 2005). Arguably managing poor performance is an essential skill within human resource management.

On a more positive note, **valuing people** and their views was seen as an important way of ensuring that the team were working together well. One manager illustrated this well with responding positively to her team's views on the need to clean up an area of the campus that they used for teaching but which had been neglected for years and had become an eyesore. She was new to the university but described how she listened to her team and made sure the area was cleaned:

And I think those kind of things are important and those are about, it is about how it makes people feel valued ...so yes I think sort of symbolic acts and signifiers are really, really key in managing and getting people to go along with what you want to do, you can't always achieve it on your own. R19

A behaviour which signified valuing the people being managed was **trusting** them to undertake their role without close supervision:

I think a general tendency to – I don't know if this is wise or not, let people alone. And not be on their backs about this, that and the other and say...Okay well [name of academic] does placements, so I just leave [name of academic] and if she wants to ask me, she will. I don't constantly go up and say, "And have you talked about, have you done this, have you done that?" And I kind of – and I think that's been a gradual process of letting go...and trusting. R13

In addition, there was importance given to other signifiers of valuing the staff being managed which included **treating them as individuals** and remembering that work is just one dimension of their lives:

I think remembering, memory is a softer skill which is a really important one, because I think, I think to maintain relationships with the people that you manage, you've got to remember from one meeting to the next the sorts of issues and concerns that they have in order to kind of, you know, just remember to be supportive that their son was in hospital or ..., their husband's going for tests or, ..., just to value the person as a rounded individual of which you get a percentage part at the time that they come to work. It is about trying to treat people as an individual and hopefully valuing them as a consequence. R10

Knowing the staff, their strengths, limitations and aspirations was also seen as a critical element of managing people. The appraisal system was seen as the way of being able to formally document this.

You have to know the staff extremely well and what their strengths and capabilities are, but also their aspirations, because we – you'll know, I mean we expect an awful lot of our academic staff. We expect them to be excellent researchers, we expect them to be excellent in the classroom and we expect them to be fantastic managers and managers of programmes and managers of their own time..... I expect to be able to go to people and say, and put them in front of a group of senior managers of an external organisation to perform there. Occasionally I might come across a person who can achieve all of those things, but in the main they will tend to excel in say, two areas. So it's really knowing, not only what the strengths and capabilities of your closest colleagues are, but also knowing their own aspirations. R23

Lastly, **the element of care** was considered when managing staff and reciprocity was seen, with the managing caring but also in return having performance expectations of the staff being managed:

....yes I can care about them and yes I can want the best for them and do my best for them, but I also have to ask more of them and I think that's a different dynamic [from students]. So I have to have higher expectations or a lot more expectations.

R7

The findings in relation to valuing people and building trust align with some of the findings of the literature reviewed. Jameson (2012) identified that trust was an essential element of value-based leadership in HE and McCroskey (2008) specified that building trust was an element of 'enabling others to act', one of the key behaviours for successful middle management in HE.

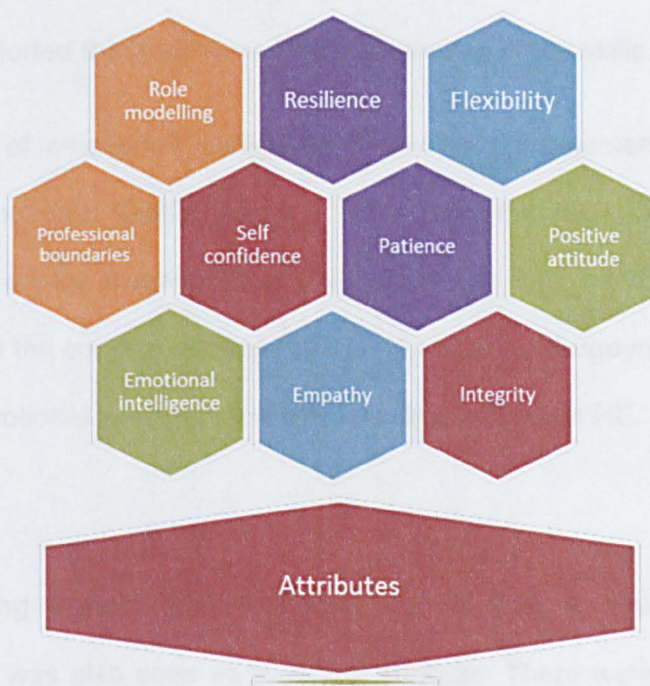
Knowing your staff and treating them as individuals was not identified in the literature. However, it might be argued that these are elements considered to be implicit when building trusting relationships.

Attributes

The interviewees provided much data on the attributes required for the middle manager. The descriptions were sometimes followed with an example from the manager's experience highlighting the importance of the attribute.

The following chart shows the elements most often used by the respondents in describing attributes:

Figure 9.6: Attributes



Emotional intelligence and integrity were seen as central qualities in the middle manager role and there were consequences if these were not present in the manager.

[softer skills]...they are essential, you need to be aware of how people will respond and how, and the impact that things are going to have on people. And to know when to follow things through and when to let things drop. You know, I think that's really important and yes...so the emotional side of managing, I think is really, really critical. R17

So I think emotional intelligence is really important. I think being open and honest is really important. And I just think being there, being visible for me is really important. R12

This certainly resonated with what I had observed in managers over the years and was seen as a key attribute in delivering the objectives of the role. Two managers considered themselves to lack emotional intelligence which made some aspects of the job very hard to deliver, but reported that they were trying to develop those skills.

The importance of emotional intelligence in middle management was identified in the literature in Jameson's (2012) paper. Also, following their LFHE funded extensive literature review on the investment of UK universities into leadership and management development and the consequent impact on performance, Burgoyne et al (2009) proposed assessing for emotional intelligence when selecting leaders in HE.

Integrity – being honest and authentic in the way in which you managed and consistently so - was also seen as a central attribute. There were various ways in which integrity was described:

But the integrity is key and because, and it builds up that trust. So that trust with individuals, but also externally. So in every transaction there has to be complete integrity, otherwise, you know, you can only be – you lack integrity once and you've lost – either you've lost the people you're leading or the individual, or you lose the business long term..... I think it's one of the most important elements.

R14

This finding accords with the findings of Bryman (2007a) whose research involving 24 academics revealed the importance of establishing trustworthiness, having personal integrity and the having credibility to act as a role model. Jameson (2012) also identifies these attributes and when referring to the work of Kouzes and Posner (1993), states that:

The trustworthiness and credibility of managers relies on values oriented leadership distinguished by integrity, honesty, high standards of moral conduct and emotional intelligence. (Jameson, 2012:396)

The ability to empathise was also stressed as an essential attribute for middle managers along with some concern that there needs to be limits to the empathy in case it interfered with the role:

As a manager you have to see things both from the perspective of the people in your team, but also from the perspective of the more senior managers. R6

I did worry whether I might over empathise with individuals and I have, there may be an element of that, but I am told by my colleagues now in [the team] that no, I don't. But certainly that worried me. R11

Related to empathy was the ability to form **professional boundaries** which allowed for integrity, honesty, empathy and support of individuals and teams but also assisted in protecting the manager from becoming over familiar with the staff they managed:

You've got to isolate yourself a little bit. I mean every manager, I think, needs to – you can't be too pally with the people you're line managing. You have to maintain a distance, a bit of a distance. So it can be a bit of a lonely furrow in that sense because you're working on your own. You know, you have to keep a distance to some extent. R14

The ability to accommodate multiple tasks and unexpected problems throughout the day required **patience, flexibility, a positive attitude and resilience**:

Yes, I think, well I think that's [emotional intelligence] vital. I think it's about also being positive. It's about having energy, because in, as a manager, sometimes it's all consuming and you tend to get, if you get problems, you don't tend to get one, you tend to get a multitude, all arrive on your desk at once. And, or unhappy people that all arrive at the same time. And it can be draining. So I think you need energy. And I think you need motivation, self-motivation and sustainability. R24

So the biggest challenges are that even with training; even having the skills, the biggest challenge is being able to shift your brain and employ those skills in different directions in a short space of time. And to prioritise. And to have a thick skin because not all of the day to day and strategic targets will happen on time.

R26

A number of other related attributes were identified in the analysis such as **self-confidence**. Many also spoke of the need to develop the confidence over a period of months and years as a manager and the impact of self-confidence on the people being managed:

And I think that quiet confidence gives others around you a sense of, a sense of 'in control' and 'confidence' in themselves. R5

There was also reference to **role modelling** in the way that the managers conducted themselves. Many spoke of being seen to undertake work themselves that they were asking of their own staff:

I try and role model ways to do something. And, you know, one of the staff members picked me up, we were moderating, and they said, 'I cannot believe you say 'thank you' to students for their work.' Or, you know, 'You say when you've enjoyed it.' And I think, 'Well why wouldn't I?' R7

Returning to the literature on HE leadership and management to identify whether these attributes might have been identified previously with HE managers, there was reference to the importance of role modelling (Bryman, 2007b) and a positive attitude (optimism) being required (Jameson 2012). However empathy, patience, flexibility, resilience, self-confidence and professional boundaries were not specifically raised as attributes in the literature.

Stresses

There is no doubt from the data that the role of a middle manager in HE was felt to be stressful.

The figure below captures the main elements of the category provided by the respondents.

Figure 9.7: Stresses



The middle managers' world was described as having many stresses which were all felt to be compounded by the universal lack of administrative support for the role and the bureaucracy which threatened to overwhelm:

I don't think that there's one thing that would resolve it, I think there's probably multiple things that would resolve it. But I think certainly people having access to an administrator to help them manage diaries, tasks, repetitive type working. R13

The **perceived isolation** of the role was seen by some as an inevitable part of the role:

...and I think a little bit of isolation that little bit of isolation as well. You know, because you could go into work and you could just not say, you could not speak to somebody for a whole day. R3

The **conflicted role of teacher and manager** was evident, with all interviewees having a reduced amount of teaching compared to that which they had prior to taking up a management position:

The double edge is I think it is taking me away from what I most love, which is hard, because I actually love the teaching. And I think I'm good at it. R7

I think it's important. Personally I enjoyed that bit of my work and I think it kept me in touch with what was happening on the ground, and I wouldn't have, if I'd – I'd have got completely, very isolated I think if I hadn't been engaging with students.

R2

The language that was used by one manager demonstrated the vehemence with which they felt teaching was no longer a priority as a manager (although research was) and that there were others who could fulfil their teaching role:

They can employ somebody else to teach what they need teaching. And that really annoys me in a way that there's no flexibility round it. You know, I'm a researcher; I publish things in educational journals. You know, the SRHE, Studies in Higher Education. Not piddly old stuff. Would they rather have me spending my time doing that or do teaching that we can get an AL² to do? R15

Crisis in resource management was seen as a stressful aspect to the role. Most managers interviewed had experienced a crisis related to resource management in the department, particularly in relation to having access to limited resources to deliver a service to students.

In relation to resource management the interviewees referred to having managerial **responsibility** for the delivery of a good quality service to students but often **without the authority** over the department's staffing budget.

But I remember, you know, going in one day and suddenly being told, 'Oh we've got five classes that need covering for this and so and so, who are you going to get to do it?' And having to, having to partly jump in myself to cover something but also trying to get contacts to get other people in to, you know, and just sort of crisis management for a long, well for several weeks. R2

A repeated stressor also mentioned in the section above on people management was **managing 'difficult staff'** and the challenges of the type of person who chooses an academic career who are perceived to be lone workers who are not naturally disposed to being managed or working in a team.

² Associate Lecturer (AL): a term used in this university for a lecturer without a permanent contract in the university, bought in to cover shortfalls in teaching capacity amongst the permanent staff.

I think another skill that is required is dealing with difficult people, dealing with difficult people, under performance or people that perform well but aren't team members. And I think that's quite difficult. And I think you don't always win either. And I think you don't always win, and as a skill that's, I don't know if it can be taught even. R3

There was also reference to the learning could be derived from managing difficult people, with a review of management skills and approaches taking place during and after events:

It's probably the single most impactful incident or series of events, I would say, that made me reappraise my approach to management. R23

Martin (2007) identified that middle management was a stressful occupation and the stresses identified by the interviewees are in accordance with this position.

However, the way in which the stresses were expressed in the data are specific to HE middle managers and relate clearly to the responsibilities of middle management identified earlier, such as performance management and the conflict felt with a reduced teaching and research profile.

Whilst the posts were considered stressful in some aspects, there was much that the managers were able to refer to as support for the role. The following section covers the support for the role and the views on the degree to which support was successful.

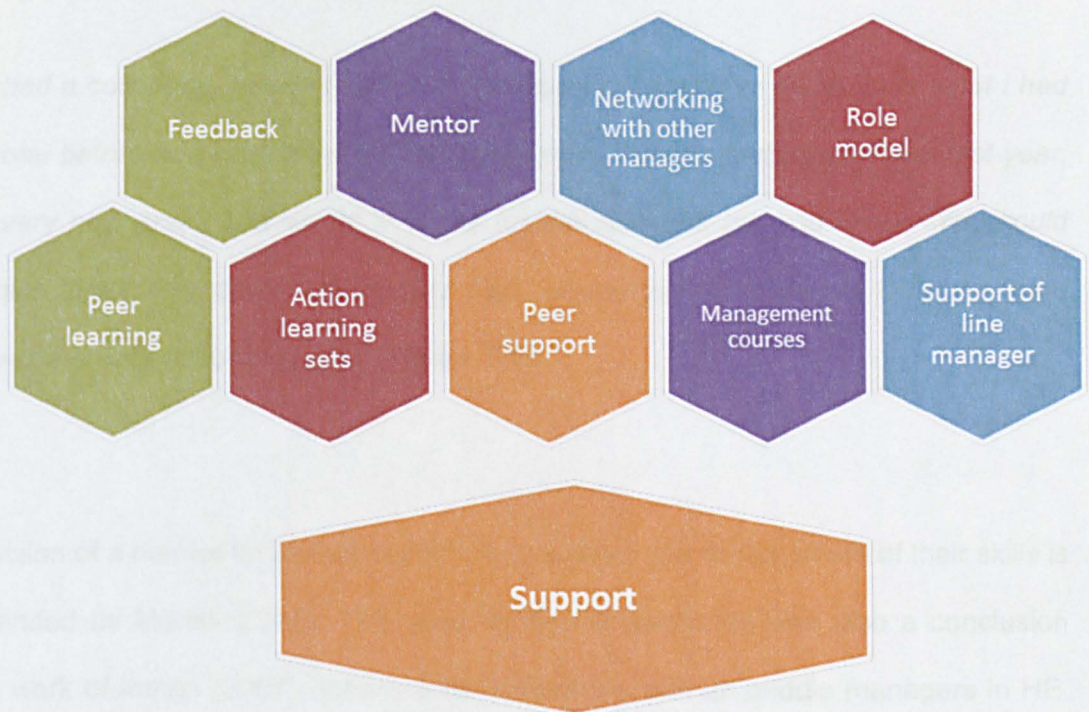
Support

Managers were very clear and articulate about the support they needed both to develop the skills for their role and the on-going support they needed. The experience of being

new to the role and without the support they needed was a vivid memory – even for those who had been in the role for many years.

The following figure shows the elements for the data analysis which made up the category of support.

Figure 9.8: Support



The need for **feedback on their role** was a common theme, to enable the managers to know whether they were providing the service that was required, how to make the changes needed and to identify any development needs.

And it's been an eye opener, and you think you're good at stuff, but actually, you know, the way you come across to people is really interesting, which is why I'm so pro doing the 360 interview. R12

The support available for the managers on a day to day basis as well as through the more challenging times was described by the managers in relation to needing feedback, **a role model and a mentor**.

Once in the position, there was also a need for feedback from colleagues who could be trusted to give honest feedback on performance:

I had a colleague, known to you, of course, who had pretty much done what I had done before and who knew me incredibly well. And so certainly for that first year, every now and again would take me to one side and go, you know, 'You could think about this, don't lose sight of that,' you know, there was a, because there was a great relationship of trust there. R13

The provision of a mentor for middle managers to support the development of their skills is recommended by Martin (2007). The need for formal mentoring was also a conclusion from the work of Inman (2007), following her interviews with 28 middle managers in HE, which focussed on the development they received to assist with their role.

Networking with managers outside of the HEI in which they were working was also seen as important in supporting managers of specific subject areas:

Well this will be discipline specific, but there is a Committee of Heads of [professional discipline] Schools, which is a really good group of people. So we get together for two days, it's a kind of overnight one every February....., it's

actually ...it's open to any institution that offers a qualifying [professional discipline] degree. So there's a lot in common, there's a lot about [professional discipline] education, any reviews going on. But also, of course, it's very supportive, because you're all heads of [professional discipline] Schools. R26

Peer support was also deemed an important source of support and in particular where the managers were located in a shared office.

Do you know where I get a lot of support from? The other people in the room, the other [managers]..... we all tend to work together on that [annual review and evaluation] and try and get it sorted out. R5

There was also a desire to have the support of peers formalised through the use of **action learning sets**. In the example below, the promise of formal action learning sets had not materialised:

Peers, not enough support. Informal, lots of support, but no formal opportunity. I think there was some... discussion that having a [manager] group but I don't know why it never worked out, because I think that would help in ... sitting with [managers] and how do they sort of handle such situations. R21

The experiences of management development programmes were also highlighted with varying views of their value. Action learning was found to be a very useful way of learning management skills and even those who had not experienced action learning thought that this would be a very helpful support to their on-going development needs:

Yes, there are two things that worked very well, I thought, and I was, yes – so the first was being part of an action learning group, as a manager, with people outside

of the institution. So the action learning group was made up of managers from – so I was probably the only one from my own institution and then the other four or five were from different institutions within the region. R10

This is confirmation of the findings of Jamali (2005), Gentle (2007) and Lefoe et al (2007), all of whom supported action learning sets as an approach to developing management skills. Gentle (2007) examined the value of action learning sets within the academic setting and has since progressed to develop this approach at the LFHE.

Some managers had experienced no formal preparation for their management positions and while they did not wish to have a formal programme of development would value the support of an action learning environment:

Well many people would say it is, you can only learn it by experience, it's very difficult to be taught it, therefore I think it may not be formal training, but sort of a discussion forum or something. R14

Other managers saw the potential value of the **peer learning** and described it as the organisation needing to create space for the 'water cooler moments' where informal discussions could take place in a formally organised space. Some had succeeded in forming their own groups with no external support in order to share experiences and ways of managing.

I think it was when I mentioned just previously about this little subversive group of heads of department that got together. R23

Others described being in the midst of attempting to organise peer support themselves but finding that there was no time.

...I kind of hoped that we would do that a little bit more between the heads of department as well.....but whether it will happen because, just because people, you know, if you've got back to back meetings all day every day, how on earth are any of us ever going to find time to do action learning with each other? You know, the reality is that things are just too busy....people want it. People would value it. If they gave us all administrators, we might have time to do it. R25

There was a very mixed view of **formal management development courses**. The perspectives were influenced either by personal experience (having had a particularly good or bad experience during a management development programme) or having a view that a management post is a professional post which required a period of professional training. The latter view is summarised in the following:

I have felt that most of my experience of it is - it's really poor. I think the defining factor that keeps hitting me on the head time and time again is the fact that very few managers in HE have ever had any management training, and they've gone from either being academics who have either taught, or more often it seems to be the research side are the ones who tend to progress towards management quicker and they've had even less experience. So I've been surprised at some of the stuff that I've come across in terms of the total lack of knowledge and insight that the higher managers tend to show. R17

There was also comment on not being able to access development programmes paradoxically because of the volume of work:

I mean there was a programme in training; unfortunately my workload meant that I missed most of it! R20

The experience of management development programmes demonstrated the importance of having a programme that is relevant to the needs of the HE managers.

The university have their own management programme, a management development programme.....which is the biggest load of tosh! It was a completely pointless day a month doing stuff that was useless. I'd be embarrassed if they were doing it with our first years. R17

These findings harmonise with those suggested by many authors, including Jamal (2005), Hotho et al (2008), and Middlehurst (2008). The provision of generic formal leadership and management courses are rejected by Middlehurst (2008) who proposes that such programmes need to be contextualised to the HE environment.

This view contrasted with that in one university where the programme had been developed in collaboration with the managers and was seen as universally helpful and supportive to their role:

I found that very, very useful, change management was a big feature...and how to manage people through change, that was incredibly useful and that was new for me. I enjoyed learning about that because, and I haven't done anything formally, so that knowledge is very useful, yes. R11

This example accords with Wisniewski's (2007) analysis of the experience of developing a programme for HE middle managers in Wisconsin, America and the consequent recommendation to base the programme on the managers' identified needs.

There was also an example of formal management programmes in previous professional occupations being of benefit, which demonstrates that the skills of management in HE are applicable to other occupational areas and transferable:

And ...I think my organisational perspectives really came into being at my time at [large commercial employer]. I was very, very blessed to be taught by some of the best in the world, pulled in by [large commercial employer]. R7

There was comment on the **supportive nature of the line manager** to the middle manager and the importance of this in managing the role.

[line manager] has been terrific and he's been very attentive, very careful, wanting to manage overload, wanting to spot burnout. He's made a point of seeing me regularly. R7

My support here has been [line manager] and [line manager] is incredibly hardworking, very passionate, I don't think there's anyone who cares more about the wellbeing of this institution than [line manager]. He's also very wise. R22

Whilst most line managers were seen as supportive, the need for **mentorship for new managers** was clearly articulated in the interviews and there was an overwhelming lack of effective mentorship experienced by the interviewees.

It appeared simply not to be a priority, in complete contrast to the emphasis that was placed on the mentorship of people new to academia. However, where there was a culture of mentorship within the organisation itself due to the nature of the courses delivered which required mentorship, it worked well:

I mean in, we've always been pretty good as an institution in terms of offering mentoring support. And I think that probably comes from where we developed as an institution, you know, there's this teacher education, nursing, midwifery, you know, the professional services like that. R23

Conclusions of the data analysis for the interviews

The three research questions will be referred to in relation to how the data have answered these. It is important to note that there were no discernible differences in the data derived from the three universities of the sample.

1. How do academic middle managers perceive their role?

The analysis of the data has provided a good insight into the way in which middle managers perceive their role. Overall, they perceive themselves to be in a role which is under appreciated by senior management in terms of the critical nature of the post to maintain the business of the university.

The perception of themselves as leaders was very clear throughout the data and they were able to articulate the way in which they saw themselves as leaders of subject disciplines and teams of academics; leadership was not seen to be the preserve of the senior leaders in the university. The skills of leadership are just as applicable to the middle manager who needs to set the vision for the department or school, set within the wider vision of the faculty and the university.

The long hours required for the role led managers to perceive that they had an impossible job which was frustrating in relation to meeting objectives. One of the signifiers of this was the long hours given to undertaking the work of the middle manager and the perspective of some of the more experienced middle managers that the hours and the demands of the job had been increasing exponentially over the last decade.

Two managers were very emotional about the impact this had had on their personal lives and they regretted the lack of their personal time that was inevitably felt by their families. The position was expressed with extreme regret. One had moved to a part time management post after retirement age and another had stepped out of the formal management hierarchy in order to address the issue.

2. What are the requisite knowledge, skills and attributes of the academic middle manager and how and when are these acquired?

There was a huge amount of data which has helped to answer this question. Managers need to understand the HE sector in which they work and this includes the HE policy context. This enables them to locate their own organisation in the HE world and the real and future impact of the policies on their own organisation, their faculty and their department. It is an understanding at many levels which prior to their appointment as managers was not an issue that required consideration in any depth. Understanding the potential impact of policy enabled the managers to anticipate, plan and prepare for the changes needed within their sphere of responsibility.

At an organisational level, the middle managers needed to understand the way in which their department or school was positioned within the larger operational unit of the university. This enabled them to translate the objectives of the organisation to the department level and to develop department objectives which articulated with those at the faculty and university level.

The managers needed to be familiar with the overall policies and procedures of the university, to interpret these for their staff and to develop good working relationships with identified colleagues who held faculty and university wide roles.

At a department, school or unit level it was important for the managers to understand the strengths and limitations of their staff and to know what resources they had available to deliver on their objectives.

One of the findings from the analysis here was the view held that it would be possible, with the right support, to enter HE management from a management role outside of HE. This challenged my own view that an apprenticeship model was needed, where the

manager had learned their role by being an experienced academic first and understanding the way in which the organisation functioned before applying for a management role.

This was not what I was expecting to find at all and there had been no indication of this within the literature searched. After this issue was first discussed in an early interview, I raised it specifically at subsequent interviews and it was clear that there were also real examples where this had been a successful model.

This finding is logical when considered with the management skills and the attributes which were identified by the middle managers, none of which would be considered to be specific to the HE sector. The knowledge required by the managers could arguably be developed after appointment and with the support of the staff reporting to the manager on professional issues such as quality assurance.

The skills, knowledge and attributes were developed in a variety of ways, but the majority view was that the managers learned by doing and trial and error. There was a desire for this to be avoided for those coming after them in management positions and a value attributed in particular to mentorship and action learning sets being formally organised by the university.

Relying on trial and error means that the speed at which the managers learn their skills is then dependent on the breadth and depth of experiences they are exposed to in the role and when these take place. Moreover, there are some attributes such as emotional intelligence, integrity and resilience which managers considered essential which may not be learned through experience or even formal development programmes and may be inherent in the characteristics and values of the person entering the management position. This has implications for the way in which managers are selected and for the individually tailored nature of the support they may need once in position.

3. What are the consequences of being an academic middle manager in relation to participation in teaching and research?

The analysis of the data described a clear impact on participation in teaching and research which would be expected and logical in moving to a management role: additional responsibilities cannot be taken on without the loss or reduction in others. This was met with some regret as for many teaching in particular was identified as the aspect of their role from which they still derived the most satisfaction and the whole reason for entering employment in HE.

There were extraordinary measures taken by some to maintain their research and teaching profile and these demonstrated commitment to the traditional academic role whilst at the same time maintaining a manager profile.

The analysis of the interview data has led to the development of an illustrative model of the knowledge, skills and attributes of the middle manager, the way in which they may be developed and their relative impact on the delivery of the role. This will be presented in detail in Chapter Ten.

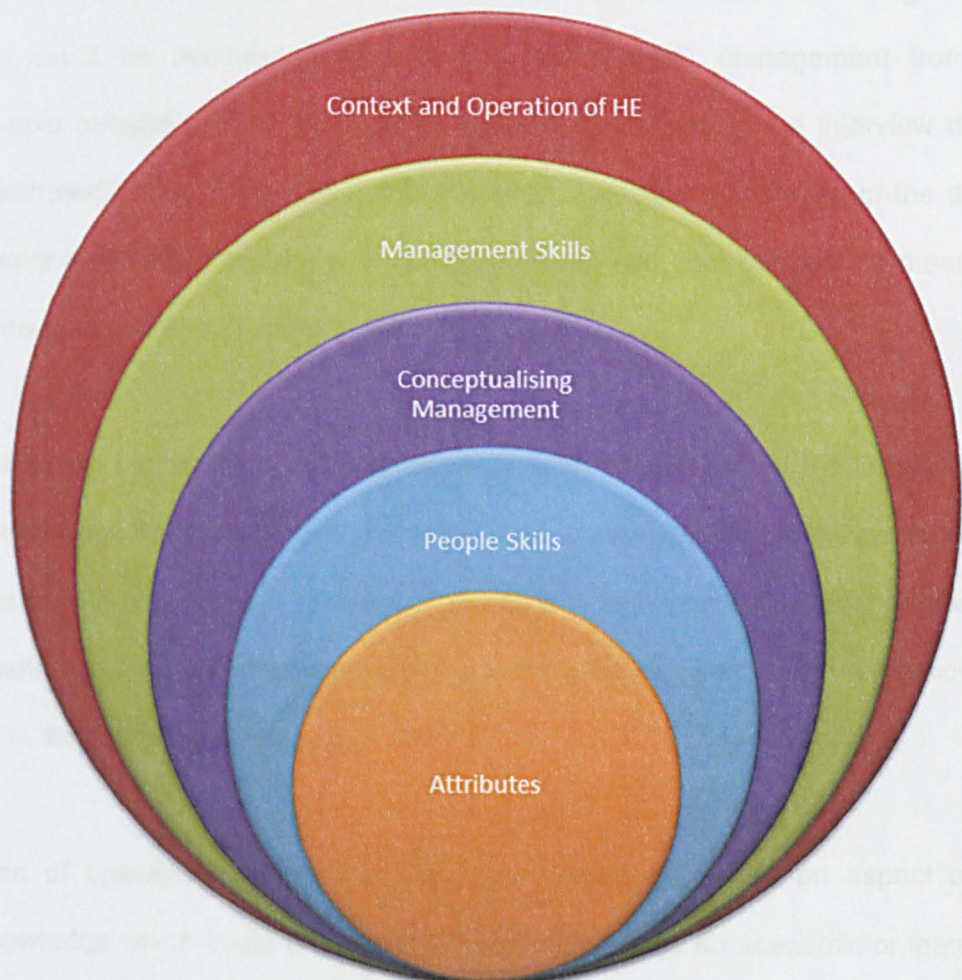
The next chapter moves to the overall conclusions of the research, and the illustrative model that has been developed from the data.

10. Conclusions

This chapter brings together the findings of the study. An illustrative model presented to assist in the understanding of the knowledge, skills and attributes required by middle managers in HE, the way in which they may be learned and developed and their relative impact on the delivery of the role.

The model is presented below and an explanation of each layer of the model is provided.

Figure 10.1: Illustrative model of middle management knowledge, skills and attributes.



Understanding the context and operation of HE

The positioning of HE, as a product of social policy with all the consequences for the provision of education and research is an important understanding for middle managers. This extended to understanding the relative position of their university and their discipline area in the broader landscape of HE.

This was considered an important part of the middle manager's intelligence of the sector which then enabled a considered response for business development in relation to their discipline. Increasingly, managers are being required to view their universities as businesses which also require much external engagement to ensure that HE activities are relevant to the future workplaces of the students.

In addition, there was reference to the issue that the contextual knowledge and understanding could be acquired from a person entering HE management from a management post outside of HE. This was an unexpected finding in the interview data which was confirmed in my employing university when, just after completion of the data analysis, a senior academic manager was appointed (on a one year contract) to manage a faculty with no previous employment in HE.

Nine months into the contract, the appointment had been considered by the faculty staff and the senior management team of the university to be so successful that the person had been offered a permanent contract. The appointment of a senior academic manager with no apprenticeship learning as an academic is a position that I would never have believed possible prior to the research study.

The foundation of operational aspects of HE were considered to be an aspect of a manager's knowledge which could be developed when in post as an academic or learned once in post as a manager, if recruited from outside of the HE sector into a management post.

Whichever way this knowledge was developed it was deemed an aspect of the manager's knowledge which was critical but was placed on the outside layer of the model to demonstrate that this was the broader context in which all the other skills were being practiced. Additionally, the relative position of each of the layers demonstrates those which can be learned (on the outer layers) and those which, increasingly, are less likely to be learned and developed (the inner layers).

Management Skills

Management skills are considered to be no different from those of any management post such as setting a vision for the department, leadership and chairing skills, planning, organising, resource management, problem solving and decision making. The management of change, delegation, influencing skills, political awareness, managing budgets and 'managing up' were all identified in both the interview and questionnaire data.

The way in which the skills are developed was for the most part through 'trial and error' and 'learning by doing'. There was however recognition that this was not an ideal way to learn to become an academic manager and there were many proposals for alternative approaches which included mentorship, action learning sets and formal peer support, all of which have implications for the support of managers which is discussed in the following chapter.

The position of 'management skills' in the illustrative model demonstrates that this is more than knowledge and understanding and requires the development of practice based skills which are utilised every day. However, it is considered that the middle management skills in HE identified are those which can be learned through a range of educational and development programmes, but with an emphasis on the practice implications of the skills. In addition, the ability to be reflective is a skill which may need practice and on-going support in its development.

Conceptualising Management

The position of the conceptualising of management – that is, the way in which the manager conceives their position - is placed next to 'People Skills' because the way in which the manager sees their management role impacts directly on their approach to managing people. The way in which a manager perceives their role is also considered to be dynamic, related to the development of their management skills and changes overtime.

This was confirmed in the interview data with managers describing how they perceived their management skills and how these matured with the experiences they gained.

People Skills

In relation to people management, there was agreement in the skills required in the interview and questionnaire data. These included trusting, knowing your people, motivating, empowering, treating people as individuals, translating the message, being in touch with the team and performance management.

The people skills required creates the picture of an ideal manager in the way that they interact with the academics they manage. The location of the people skills in the model is further into the centre as the layer represents an aspect of management that is considered less easy to learn because the skill in managing people will, to an extent, be dependent on the attributes of the manager. That is, there may be aspects of people management which will rely on the manager's underlying characteristics – such as emotional intelligence and the ability to empathise with others.

Attributes

The attributes identified included integrity, self-confidence, resilience, empathy and emotional intelligence. Again, there was an alignment in the findings in both sets of data, from the perspective of the managers and the academics. There is no doubt that all managers, even those who declared that they did not possess the necessary attributes such as emotional intelligence, were aware and were in agreement about what is needed.

Attributes are placed at the centre of the illustrative model as they are considered to be the required feature of a manager on which many of the others represented in the layers of the model are dependent. The extent to which they are dependent is also related to the location in the model. Hence, the layer of people skills adjacent to attributes is considered to be heavily impacted upon by the attributes of the manager and the ability to develop the knowledge and understanding of the context and operation of HE is the least likely to be impacted upon by the manager's attributes.

In addition, it is considered that the outer layers are those management features which are the most likely to be developed over time and through formal and informal learning. It is proposed that the attributes described are less likely to be learned and more likely to be a characteristic of the person which is more resistant to change. This has potential consequences for the way in which managers are selected and supported which is discussed in the following chapter on professional implications of the research findings.

The conclusions and the potential efficacy of the illustrative model are considered in relation to professional practice in the final chapter of the thesis. The overall strengths and limitations of the thesis are also presented.

11. Reflections and Implications for Professional Practice

This chapter explores reflections on the research process, the strengths and limitations of the thesis and the implications of the findings of the study for professional practice in Higher Education. Practical applications for the findings will be proposed and suggestions made for the way in which Human Resources Departments within the HEIs of the study might consider applying the conclusions of the research.

The purpose of an educational doctorate is to undertake research which results in a contribution to professional knowledge (Burgess et al 2006). The research undertaken is considered to have made a contribution to the understanding of the current role of the middle manager in post 1992 universities and the knowledge, skills and attributes required for this role. This has built on the work of many other researchers who have examined the motivations, aspirations and experiences of middle managers in HE and brings up to date existing knowledge within the current policy context of Higher Education.

The findings have been captured within an illustrative model which provides an ease of reference which can be usefully applied when considering succession planning and the recruitment and selection of middle managers as well as the policy related to these practices.

The study has also built upon the existing knowledge concerning the support and development needs of middle managers and how these might be most effectively addressed, taking into account the current context and challenges of Higher Education.

The proposals for practice are directed to four distinct areas:

- Senior Managers in HE: implications for the way in which middle management is conceived, constructed and supported in HE at an institutional level and expectations of the role of the middle manager.
- Human Resource Managers in HE: implications for the way in which managers are selected, inducted and supported to develop in their roles.
- Potential application of the findings to other areas of professional practice such as nursing.
- An exploration of the impact of the research on the researcher.

Reflections on the research process

I recognise that I was in a privileged position as a researcher when I undertook the research. Many of the people I interviewed in my own organisation at the time were known to me and although none was line managed by me, three had been managed by me in the years before the research was undertaken and one had worked as a peer in a previous management configuration.

Throughout the research I was aware that such privileged information must be used wisely and ethically. I was also aware that what some respondents said in the interviews about their own behaviour was not my experience of their behaviour previously. The latter resonates with the issue of multiple versions of socially constructed 'truth' covered in Chapter Four (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007b).

The situation also brought into mind Hellawell's (2006) paper on being an insider researcher. For example, I had observed one of the respondents in practice and seen that there were times when they were, in my view, challenged by their role and lacking insight into the effect of their own behaviour on others. The manager concerned demonstrated a highly procedural rather than relational approach to the management role to which, in my experience, academics did not respond well.

The manager was however highly skilled and accomplished in other areas which relied on a structured approach and an eye for detail. Additionally, it was really positive to hear during the interview that they had the insight and self-awareness to know that emotional intelligence was a development need.

This unique and privileged position as a researcher provided an advantage in that I was able to judge the efficacy of the interview as a research instrument. It served as a reminder that interviewees may provide data which is aligned with what they think the researcher wishes to hear; however, what is expressed may also be their version of the 'truth' which may not accord with the researcher's experience.

The generation of rich data through the interview process is considered to be a strength of the study. The academic middle managers gave generously of their time and they provided detailed and considered responses to the questions asked during the interviews. The analysis of the interview data, following a clear auditable process, has provided a picture of the current challenges for these middle managers in the context of the rapidly changing world of Higher Education.

Whilst the interviews provided robust data, the findings may be limited to the three environments in which the managers were working. The sample was drawn from middle managers working in three post 1992, teaching intensive universities and the findings may not be reflective of academic middle managers working in other HEIs - and perhaps in particular those with a very different set of internal and external pressures, such as research intensive universities.

The survey provided a limited view of the perceptions and aspirations of academics working in the three universities and the findings cannot be considered as representing all academics working in the HEIs involved in the study. It has however given an indication of

potential areas which may be of interest to explore in any future study concerning this subject.

The implications of the findings must necessarily be viewed in the light of the strengths and limitations of the research. Given the significant limitations of the survey, the areas explored in the next section therefore concentrate primarily on the conclusions related to the interviews.

Senior managers in Higher Education

The research demonstrated that middle managers consider that they have multiple expectations of their role; they experience role conflict and reported that the only way they felt able to deliver on the objectives of their role was to work beyond their contracted hours to a level which impacted significantly on their personal lives.

The role of the middle manager is critical in the delivery of the objectives of the organisation (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997) so there is a need to determine at a strategic level whether this is a sustainable model and how the role expectations might be revised in collaboration with senior managers to enable a more balanced position in terms of the scope and objectives.

There is also a requirement and a responsibility for the senior managers to consider the health and wellbeing of the middle managers. Arguably however, the excessive working hours may extend to the higher levels of leadership and management so that this becomes a cultural expectation within the organisation.

An example of this occurred at the university in which I was previously employed. A statement from the Vice Chancellor was made in 2011 in response to the concern from the academic community that the senior management team were in the habit of regularly

sending emails requiring a response throughout the evenings and weekends. This practice continued after the statement was made, despite the academic community being given 'permission' not to immediately answer emails sent at these times.

I believe this exemplifies a culture of long working hours and a failure to model a change in working practices from the very top of the organisation which ultimately perpetuates the situation and prevents the desired change from being implemented. This also provides an illustration of Kennie and Woodfield's (2008) mismatch of rhetoric and reality in top teams in HEIs.

HEIs in England are currently required to complete annual TRAC data which includes total working hours. A positive step within the HEIs would be to examine the hours reported to be worked by the middle managers in the TRAC data and, if any are reporting that they are working over what would be expected in their role, to open a dialogue with them to explore the ways in which their excessive workloads can be addressed.

Part of that dialogue would be centred on what is expected of the middle manager. The role conflict experienced by the middle managers in the study demonstrated that they were unsure about how to balance their multiple roles and many were trying to retain significant roles in teaching and research.

Role expectation is an important consideration when developing criteria for the selection and recruitment of middle managers in HE. In the university I have moved from, the most recently appointed middle manager expressed delight when appointed because they would have significantly more time for their personal research as the managers below them in the hierarchy would, they believed, do all the managing of people and resources in the school.

They appeared to have misunderstood the main focus of the post as support of people, the management of resources and contribution to the overall strategy and success of the faculty and the university. The overwhelming evidence in this study contradicted this expectation of maintaining a high profile in research whilst working as a middle manager.

However, it is possible that the new manager was appointed by senior managers who are so distant from the middle manager role that they do not have a full understanding of the day-to-day operational requirements. The new manager may have been led to believe that active research would be a viable part of the role, which would support Walseth's (2009) view that the complexity of the role requires clearer articulation when advertising middle manager posts.

This distance between the senior managers and the operational aspects of middle management was illustrated in one of the memos I wrote during the time of the data collection. I attended a meeting in my role as a dean where one of the senior managers in the university proposed introducing a new policy on timetabling which was completely out of step with the academic cycle at an operational level. The lack of understanding highlighted the importance of the middle manager in informing policies created at a senior level and ensuring that these are implementable.

Human resource managers in Higher Education

There was some evidence in the research to support a revised approach to the succession planning and selection of managers in HE which builds on Deem's (2007) proposal that more attention needs to be given to the selection and support of managers in HE.

The survey findings, whilst limited, provided a view that there are some academics who are in the process of considering middle management as a career option and others who

may consider this in the future. HR departments might reflect on how academic middle management posts can be presented as a viable opportunity for career development.

Consideration might be given to help academics 'self-identify' as potential managers and to understand how their existing knowledge, skills and attributes might be developed in anticipation of applying for a management role.

There was also a clear finding in the research that professionals from outside academia can make successful leaders and managers. This was most unexpected but does indicate that not all succession planning needs to be an internal process. The people appointed from outside of the HE sector are, based on the findings of this study, likely to have had a relationship with HE in their previous professional roles, such as providing work based learning opportunities for university students within their own organisations.

Based on the reported success of managers who have not undertaken an academic apprenticeship, HR departments should consider accessing this potential pool of candidates when seeking to fill academic management posts.

The selection process

It is proposed that the way in which managers are selected should be tested, based on the knowledge, skills and attributes identified in the research and presented in the five layers of the illustrative model presented in the previous chapter. This position builds on the proposals by Burgoyne et al (2009) presented in the literature review. It is time to dispense with the practice where excellent teachers are identified to become managers of teachers with no regard to the difference in the unique skill sets required for each of the roles.

At the centre of the model is 'attributes' which are considered to be the core requirement of the manager and which may be the most challenging to identify and develop in an

aspiring manager. The attributes identified by the interviewees, such as integrity, honesty and empathy, reflect the values held by the individual and are arguably more difficult to be taught in a management development programme. From experience, such attributes are rarely discussed or tested at interview.

This has led me to consider if these attributes cannot be developed, whether it is possible for managers to develop alternative skills to compensate. For example, the manager referred to earlier in this chapter who declared a lack of emotional intelligence for example, had excellent skills in other areas, which might indicate a suitability for a management role more closely aligned with a quality management role, rather than a position requiring significant skills in managing people.

The next layer is 'people skills', upon which the delivery of the middle manager's job is going to rely very heavily and this is related to the attributes of the manager. For example, it would not be possible to have good people skills if the manager has little emotional intelligence or empathy.

Surrounding this is 'conceptualising management' as it is proposed that the way in which a manager perceives their role will impact on the way in which they deliver the role and again, this is a challenging area to influence and develop. However, being given the opportunity to reflect on the role and to discuss challenges with peers may assist in the development of the way in which managers think about their role and the way in which they perform.

The two outer layers of 'management skills' and 'context and operation of HE' are considered to be the skills which can be taught, developed and transferred from other roles more easily than the other three. This was evidenced in the research by the reported success of managers appointed from outside academia.

It is suggested that HR departments consider the findings of the study and determine ways to test the utility of the findings of the study in the selection process. For example, it may be possible to use an emotional intelligence test as part of the selection process, to ask the candidate at interview for an example of their chosen role model in management and to describe that role model's attributes and behaviours.

I have returned to the Human Resource (HR) department at one of the universities in the study as they were keen to learn more about the findings of the research. The Director of HR has concluded that they wish to utilise the illustrative model and all the elements of which it is comprised to develop further their selection process for middle management posts. They are particularly interested in the proposal to test for attributes in the application, shortlisting and interview processes and for the perception of the managers concerning their view of their management role to be explored.

Support for middle managers

It would be inexcusable for organisations centred on learning and development to have no time and resources allocated to support the middle managers to learn, develop and grow in their professional role. For those academics who are already in a management position, the findings of the research demonstrate a clear need for development opportunities.

The types of structural support identified included action learning sets, structured reflection, feedback, including 360 degree, support from line managers, informal learning, mentoring of new managers and in some cases, formal development programmes.

The areas to be included in any development opportunities should always be centred on the needs identified by the participants. A starting point would be to offer development opportunities relevant to the skills, knowledge and attributes identified in this study. These included, for example, time management, people management, dealing with difficult people and learning to cope with their own emotions.

The study has provided some indicators of successful support structures and programmes for middle managers against which Human Resource Departments in HEIs can assess their provision.

Potential application of the findings to other professionals

I was completing the study at a time when the second Francis Report was published on the hospital in mid-Staffordshire (Francis 2013). I was struck by the similarity of the concerns and recommendations within the report to the findings of my research in relation to leadership and management, albeit that Francis was reporting on hospital based nursing care.

Francis (2013) identified that the culture of care in the hospital ward was established and maintained by the leader (ward sister or charge nurse) and that the leaders needed to be properly selected, prepared and supported for their roles. Francis (2013) identified that the leaders of the wards needed to have time to lead and manage and recommended that they practise in a supervisory capacity. He recognised that some of the failings in care could be related to a lack of leadership and management capability and capacity within the senior nursing staff on the wards and made several recommendations for change specifically for nurse leadership (recommendation numbers 195, 196 and 197 in the report: Francis, 2013:106)

This position resonated strongly with the research findings and has led me to consider whether the model proposed in my research is not unique to the Higher Education sector and may be applicable to other settings. Discussions with senior nursing colleagues have confirmed the view that the model proposed in my findings and the core of personal attributes and people skills are as applicable to the healthcare setting for nurses in leadership and management positions as they are for middle managers in HE.

This is not an area I have been able to examine in any detail within the parameters of the doctorate but is one which can be explored further in the future with the senior contacts I have in nursing.

Impact on the researcher

An indication of the significant impact of the research study is that I left academia and an 18 year career in HE that I had expected to follow to my retirement. The research findings served to underline that the issues I had faced in academia such as poor management practice, lack of support for the development of managers and long working hours were issues entrenched in the culture of higher education, were longstanding and not unique to the organisation in which I was employed at the start of the study.

Furthermore, I listened to the stories of middle managers long working hours and identified with the respondents very strongly; I reflected on my own working hours of 60-70 per week and the impact of this on me and my family over many years. I was deeply affected by the regret expressed by older managers about the excessive time given to the management role over the years and consequent neglect of their families and partners.

The managers who had been in academia for two or three decades were also able to provide a perspective of the changing demands of the role of the academic middle manager which again accorded with the reasons for the research. They referred to increased demands on the middle manager partly created by an explosion of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy was, in many instances, considered to no longer be meaningful in relation to the purpose of higher education; it therefore diminished the role to one of administration and process. I identified so strongly with these stories that I noted in the research memos

of such interviews that "I felt I was listening to myself". I concluded during the course of the research that if I did not find an alternative and more creative way to utilise my management and leadership skills - essentially by moving from academia - I would be working long hours and wrestling with bureaucracy up to retirement.

I remain deeply concerned by the working hours of the majority of the managers I interviewed and believe that this is an unsustainable position for the sector. Moreover, the long working hours of line managers are visible to the academic community and may deter academics from considering a career in management, making succession planning problematic. This has been evidenced personally in the conversations I have had during the course of the research at my employing university.

I recognise that the latter was all privileged information and only available to me by virtue of my relationship with colleagues in the place of work. However, since leaving the university, my new role includes occasional meetings with academics across a range of universities in the UK.

Recently, in congratulating an academic manager from a university completely unrelated to the study, on the achievement of their doctorate, I asked how they had managed to be a department manager, support their family and complete their doctoral studies. The manager replied simply and directly: "it cost me my marriage". The latter comment served to reinforce my decision to have left the academic management world.

One of the positive aspects of changing roles to the charitable sector is that many of the management and leadership skills learned in the HE sector were entirely transferable to the new post. I am now a chief executive of a national nursing charity where I am in closer contact with patients, service users and carers and have the freedom to create practice development educational material that is responsive to the need in practice.

There are implications for further research in which the significance of the elements of the illustrative model presented in the previous chapter and the implications for practice presented in this chapter could be trialled or tested in a controlled way. This would align with the inductive research approach taken in the study in which findings generated from the respondents and grounded in the data are later tested utilising a more rationalistic approach.

Such a practical application of the study's findings also harmonises with the philosophy of the professional educational doctorate in which the real world of professional practice is developed through the findings of research undertaken by the professionals working within the environment.

In addition, the research focused on middle managers in post 1992 universities and as such the results may only be applicable to managers working in these environments. Arguably, the experiences of managers in the more research intensive, red-brick universities may be quite different. It may be of interest therefore to explore the perceptions and aspirations of middle managers in these universities and to determine whether there are significant differences which would lead to the proposal of an alternative set of knowledge, skills and attributes required for their positions and a more comprehensive picture of the middle manager in Higher Education.

My move from academia has so far proved to be a very positive experience, but I still feel passionate about the changes needed to the role of the middle manager in Higher Education. I am hopeful that the results of the research will be considered by the HEIs involved with the study in order to positively influence the role and support of the middle manager.

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Appendix One

Interview Schedule for Line Managers in Higher Education

Reminders:

- Consent form
- 3 year moratorium on the publication of the work
- Format of the interview, length of time available and starting with a brief biography (QandA) of your time in Higher Education as an academic and as a manager
- Critical/significant incident will also be asked for toward the end of the interview

Biographical Questions

1. Date of Interview		
2. Name		
3. Gender (circle)	Male / Female	
4. Age band (circle)	30-35, 36-40, 41-45, 45-50, 51-55, 56-60, 60-64, 65-70	
5. Specialist subject area		
6. Professional background prior to HE (if any)		
7. Length of time in HE (years)		
8. Length of time in total as a line manager in HE (months or years)		
9. Positions as a line manager in HE prior to current position and time in each position.	Position/Title	Dates/length of time
	i	
	ii	
	iii	
	iv	

10. Number of people managed in each position and HE name	Number of people managed	University
	i	
	ii	
	iii	
	iv	
	v	

11. Before I start to ask specific questions, would you like to talk in general about your views on management in HE?

12. Current Line Management

- a) How many people do you currently manage?
- b) What is the range of subjects within your sphere of responsibility as line manager?
- c) How many teaching hours on average do you currently teach per week? Is that roughly your usual allocation?

13. Reasons for becoming a Manager in HE

- a) What led you to become a line manager in HE?
- b) Was this an aspiration when you started your career in HE?

14. Changes to role and perspective

- a) How has your role and perspective changed from being a lecturer in HE to now being a manager (and a lecturer) in HE?
- c) Can you tell me something about the *differences* in the skill sets you require as a lecturer and a manager in HE?
- d) Do you feel as if you have left anything behind when you became a manager (eg teaching)?
- e) Tell me about how you made that transition to becoming a manager.

- f) Were there aspects of your management when you first became a manager that you have since changed either consciously or unconsciously?

15. In your view, what are the essential knowledge requirements for the manager in HE?

- a) How have *you* developed this knowledge?

16. In your view, what are the essential skills required in delivering the HE manager role?

(prompt: people management, change management, project management, course management, problem solving)

- a) How have *you* developed these skills?

17. In your view, what are the essential attributes for a manager in HE?

(prompt: emotional intelligence, dealing with own emotions, soft skills, values, beliefs and attitudes)

- a) How have *you* acquired or developed these attributes?

18. In your view, are there any gender issues in management in HE?

- a) How have you experienced these? Can you provide any examples?

19. What support has been offered to assist you with the development of your knowledge, skills and attributes as an HE manager?

- a) To what extent has this been effective?

20. Have you identified what is needed to support you in your role as a manager? How have you identified these needs?

- a) How have you sought access to this support?
(If not, then why not?)
- b) Through whom has this access been sought?
- c) Has this support been effective? How has it been effective?
(If not, then why not?)

21. What is your perception of your role within the wider university structure?

22. Do you have aspirations to develop your career further as a manager in HE?

23. To what extent (if at all), and in what ways, has the role of the manager in HE changed, in your view, since you started to be a manager?

a) How, if at all, do you anticipate the role changing in the near future?

24. Can you recall and recount any critical incident from which you think you have learned most about management in HE?

a) What are the lessons you learned from this incident?

25. Finally, is there anything I haven't touched upon that you expected to be raised and which you think it is important for you to talk about now?

<i>Thanks and reminder that the written transcription will be made available for corrections and verification.</i>
--

Appendix Two

Information Sheet

Research on the role of the Middle Manager in post 1992 Higher Education

I am undertaking an Educational Doctorate on the role of the middle manager in Higher Education. The full title of the research is: *The role of the academic middle manager in post 1992 Higher Education: perceptions and aspirations.*

Previous research in this area has been undertaken many years ago and there is very little current empirical research which explores the skills, knowledge and attributes required to undertake the role in a 21st century university.

The research will include interviews with middle managers (Heads of School or equivalent) in three universities in the UK:



Interviews will also be conducted with the line managers of Heads of School or equivalent (such as Executive Deans of Faculties) and the academic lead for the university (such as the Pro Vice Chancellor – academic) in each of the three universities.

In order to provide a full picture of the expectations of the role, academics will also be approached to provide their view of the requisite knowledge, skills and attributes of the academic middle manager. They will also be invited to provide their view on personal aspirations to become academic managers. The academics' perspectives will be obtained via electronic self completion questionnaires.

The research will be conducted under the direction of my doctorate supervisor, Professor David Hellawell, of the Open University and is subject to ethical approval in each of the universities listed above and the Open University. All data collected throughout the research will remain confidential to the researcher and no individuals will be named in any written reports or publications. The interview data collected will be analysed and returned to the individual interviewee to ensure that the content is acceptable to them. Participants are free to withdraw at any stage of the research without reason or penalty.

It is anticipated that the findings of the research will inform the way in which the role of the Middle Manager/Head of School is conceived, constructed, supported and understood by the university. In addition, it is anticipated that this research will help in the identification and preparation of future leaders and managers from within the academic staff.

NB: In order to retain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, dissemination of the study into the public domain will be delayed until three years after the completion of the research project.

Crystal Oldman



Appendix Two (continued)

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: The role of the academic middle manager in Higher Education: perceptions and aspirations.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Crystal Oldman, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐☐☐

Please tick box

Yes

No

4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

☐☐☐☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix Three Questionnaire

higher education management

1. Current position in the University

*1. What is your position in the University?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Research Assistant | <input type="radio"/> Head of Department |
| <input type="radio"/> Research Fellow | <input type="radio"/> Professor |
| <input type="radio"/> Executive Dean | <input type="radio"/> Lecturer |
| <input type="radio"/> Pro-Dean | <input type="radio"/> Lecturer/Practitioner |
| <input type="radio"/> Deputy Dean | <input type="radio"/> Clinical Academic |
| <input type="radio"/> Associate Dean | <input type="radio"/> Senior Lecturer |
| <input type="radio"/> Vice Chancellor | <input type="radio"/> Principal Lecturer |
| <input type="radio"/> Pro Vice Chancellor | <input type="radio"/> Reader |
| <input type="radio"/> Head of School | <input type="radio"/> Technician |
| <input type="radio"/> Dean | |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

2. Years worked in Higher Education

*1. How many years in total have you worked in Higher Education?

- ☐ Up to 6 months
- ☐ more than 6 months and less than 1 year
- ☐ Up to 2 years
- ☐ Up to 3 years
- ☐ Up to 4 years
- ☐ Up to 5 years
- ☐ Up to 6 years
- ☐ Up to 7 years
- ☐ Up to 8 years
- ☐ Up to 9 years
- ☐ Up to 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 but less than 15 years
- ☐ More than 15 but less than 20 years
- ☐ 20 years or more

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2. How many Higher Education Institutions have you ever worked in?

☐ Just this HEI that I am working on now

☐ One other HEI

☐ Two other HEIs

☐ Three other HEIs

☐ Four other HEIs

☐ Five other HEIs

More than 5 other HEIs (please specify how many)

3. History of working as a manager in HE or in a previous job

1. Are you currently working as a manager in Higher Education?

☐ Yes, I am currently working in a management position

☐ No, I am not currently working in a management position

4.

*1. Have you ever worked in an explicitly management role in Higher Education? (such as a Head of Department, Head of School or a Dean?)

☐ No

☐ Yes

5.

1. Please state the posts you have held as a manager and the length of time you spent in the post/s.

Current post and length of time (if working as a manager now)

Post One and duration

Post Two and duration

Post Three and duration

Post Four and duration

Post Five and duration

Post Six and duration

Post Seven and duration

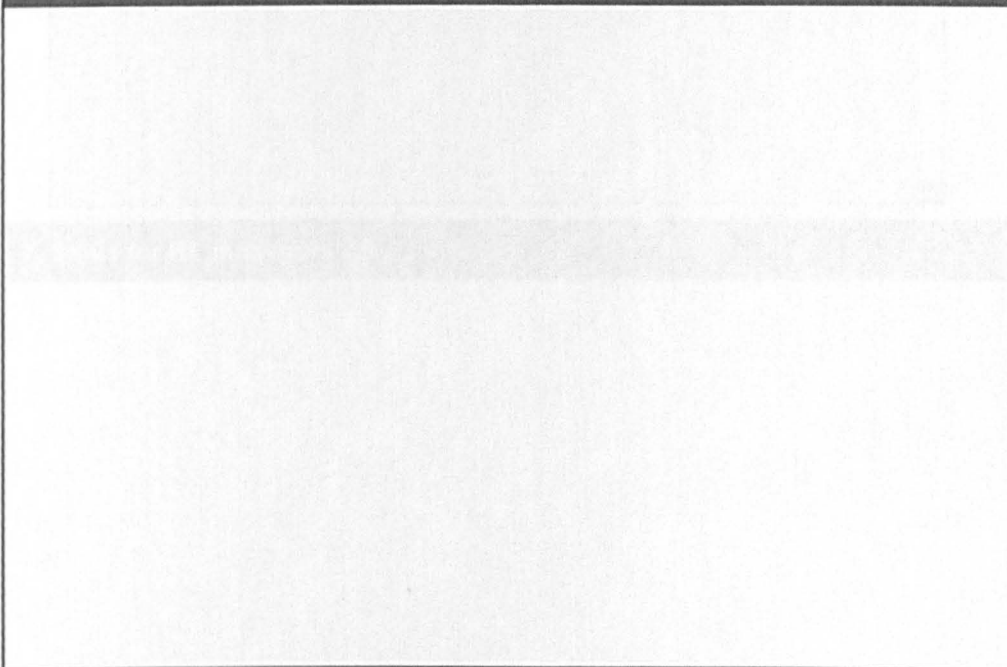
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***2. Would you consider an application to a management post in Higher Education either now or in the future?**

- ☐ N/A I am currently in a management position
- ☐ Yes, I have applied for a management post/s but have not yet been successful
- ☐ Yes, I feel I am ready to apply now
- ☐ No, I am not yet ready to apply but might consider this as an option in the future
- ☐ Maybe, I have never seriously considered management as a career route
- ☐ Never, I would never consider a career in management in HE
- ☐ Never again; I have been a manager in HE and do not wish to return to management
- ☐ Never say never; I have been a manager in HE and may consider this in the future
- ☐ Other (please specify)



6. Consideration of Management and Leadership in Higher Education



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*** 1. If you were to consider a career move to HE management, what influencing factors do you consider important?**

(please state N/A if you would never consider a career in management in HE)

	Very important	Important	Fairly important	Not important at all	N/A
Career progression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Potential contribution to the overall achievement of the university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explicit support & encouragement of your colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoyment of managing people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to make a difference at a more strategic level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being in a position to support fellow academics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other influencing factors (please specify)

7. Skills for HE managers

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*** 1. In your view, to what extent are the knowledge requirements below important for a manager in Higher Education today?**

	Essential	Important	Fairly important	Not important at all	Not required
A management qualification at master's level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A proven background and understanding of at least one subject area in their sphere of management responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A successful background of working as an academic in Higher Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A successful history of working as a course leader or subject lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A successful research portfolio	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A thorough understanding of the way in which the Higher Education sector works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

higher education management

* 2. In your view, to what extent are the following skills requirements for all managers in Higher Education today?

	Essential	Important	Fairly important	Not important at all
Resource management (including timetabling skills)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excellent interpersonal skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proven skills in successfully managing people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excellent communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Project planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Project management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Report writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with external agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ability to take a wider, more strategic view	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Budget management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

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3. In your view, to what extent are the following attributes required in Higher Education managers today?

	Essential	Important	Fairly important	Not important at all
Approachable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Action oriented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Positive attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open to alternative views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decisive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open communication style	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skilled advocate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willing to tackle difficult issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An enterprising approach to developing new business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

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4. To what extent do the following statements reflect your OVERALL experience of being managed in Higher Education?

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	N/A
I have experienced excellent management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have experienced good management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have experienced reasonable management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have experienced poor management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have experienced variable management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

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5. To what extent do the following statements reflect your **CURRENT** experience of being managed in Higher Education?

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	N/A
I am currently experiencing excellent management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am currently experiencing good management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am currently experiencing reasonable management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am currently experiencing poor management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am currently experiencing variable management in HE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

8. Your views of Management and Leadership in Higher Education

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1. Please state here any views and experiences you have of leadership and management in Higher Education.

Examples will help to illustrate the knowledge, skills and attributes you believe are required for leaders and managers currently working in Higher Education.

